HERITAGE OF VEDIC CULTURE

' . . . without that periodical reacquisition of the racial heritage by each generation, civilization would die a sudden death.'

—Will Durant

Our Oriental Heritage

SATYAVRATA
SIDDHANTALANKAR

Heritage of Vedic Culture

A Pragmatic Presentation

S. J. TARAPOREVALA
(Associate Author)

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OM . . .

In
love, homage, and gratitude
to
CHANDRAVATI LAKHANPAL,
wife of Satyavrata Siddhantalankar,
who lived not to see this work in print.

. . . OM

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE title of the book is *Heritage of Vedic Culture.*

Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in *The Discovery of India:* 'What is my inheritance? To what am I an heir? To all that humanity has achieved during tens of thousands of years, to all that it has thought and felt and suffered and taken pleasure in, to its cries of triumph and its bitter agony of defeat, to that astonishing adventure of man which began so long ago and yet continues and beckons to us. To all this and more in common with all men. But there is a special heritance for those of us of India . . . something that is in our flesh and blood and bones, that has gone to make us what we are and what we are likely to be.'

That inheritance which in the words of Jawaharlal Nehru is in our flesh and blood and bones is contained in the wisdom of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, and all these we know and designate as Vedic culture.

The present book is an exposition of the fundamental tenets of Vedic culture. These have been inherited by those of us who look to the past with pleasure, pride, and prestige

Professor Satyavrata Siddhantalankar is a prolific writer on Vedic thought. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan while writing the Foreword of his translation of the Upanishads has said:

'The texts of the Upanishads are not to be read simply. They are meant for meditation . . . The very first verse of Isha Upanishad makes out that this world is a perpetual procession of events where everything supersedes another. But this passing show is not all. It is informed by the Supreme Spirit, enveloped by God We should not look at the world merely from the outside as a succession of events but perceive beneath it the burning intensity of significance which penetrates the succession Every occasion of the world is a means for transfiguring our insight By renouncing everything we become the lords of everything '

Continuing further regarding Professor Satyavrata Siddhantalankar's exposition of the Upanishads he says: 'I am pleased to find that Professor Satyavrata who was for some years Vice Chancellor of Gurukula University, Hardwar, and is well known as the author of many important works in Hindi on Ancient Indian Culture, Education, etc , has now written an exhaustive account of the Upanishads '

Corresponding to his translations of the Upanishads Professor Satyavrata Siddhantalankar has also written an exhaustive explanatory translation of the Bhagawad Gita. In its foreword the late Prime Minister of India Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri remarked that it is an enlightening and thought provoking thesis written in a very lucid style, and meant both for the academician as well as the common man.

With such credentials it is needless to say that Professor Satyavrata Siddhantalankar together with his associate author S. J. Taraporevala is a fit person to write on the *Heritage of Vedic Culture.* It is this heritage that has inspired, still inspires, and will continue to inspire the Indian people.

After Independence there has been growing consciousness in the educational system of the country to learn more of our ancient heritage. Most of the universities have prescribed curricula to meet this urgently pressing demand. Moreover though there has always been a substantial degree of interest and appreciation in the West for Vedic thought and culture, in recent years the desire to gain a knowledgeable insight into the same has grown deeper and intenser.

It is therefore hoped that this book will meet the demands of the universities as well as the persons of the West who desire to know about India's cultural heritage. This heritage has survived through the ages and penetrates deeply into the everyday life of the people of this ancient most culture and civilization.

Sd/- M. D. DAVID
Lecturer in History and Indian Culture

Wilson College,
Bombay.

PREFACE

IN recent times there is an upsurge of persons in Europe who are anxious to overhaul and completely reconstruct the social structure of the modern world. These people endorse the widely prevalent view that whatever has been achieved so far in the course of evolution has been based only on selfishness, jealousy, distrust, hatred, greed, avarice, and aggrandisement. And since these elements have ultimately led to restlessness and war, this thinking intelligentia proposes to substitute them with the other and the exactly opposite qualities of truth, love, sympathy, self-abnegation, and sacrifice in order to create a new world. The emergence of this type of spiritual awakening in Europe which is the stronghold of materialism is not surprising in the context of the degenerated present conditions

But centuries ago, Indian saints and sages had come to the conclusion that the elements on which materialism was based were without content. They upheld that humanity could not move even one step forward by making them the basic principles of life. This factual statement is corroborated by experience For how far has the world advanced by making jealousy, distrust, hatred, anger, lust, greed, and attachment the basis of social reconstruction? The spiritual thinkers of India went to the extent of propounding that materialism could not even survive without the constituents of spiritualism Is there any materialist who considers himself to be following the right code of conduct when he indulges in murder, falsehood, theft, dishonesty, and licentiousness? No, not even one, but why not ?

If it is upheld that only that which is visible is true, and that the invisible is not true, then selfishness can and must be the *summum bonum* of life. In this context selflessness, service, love, friendliness, brotherhood, and benevolence can be considered right only when they help to achieve some personal, selfish end and wrong when they obstruct it. Yes, this should necessarily always be the materialistic point of view. It is, however, amazing to note that even the materialists speak highly of those very elements which are valued as essentials by the spiritualists Is it not surprising that even the materialists hesitate to give up totally their allegiance to truth, love, honesty, and other similar elements? The reason is not far to seek.

The materialists also realize that ultimately it is truth and not untruth which both works and survives in the world They readily admit that it is love not jealousy, sympathy not hatred, co-operation not antagonism, and non-violence not violence which mitigate the harshness of the machine of life.

However, it cannot be denied that truth, love, sympathy, non-violence, etc., which are the universally recognised essentials of spiritualism, are not accepted as basic tenets by materialism. In the ultimate analysis it will be found that in practice materialists adhere to them only so long as they fulfil their personal ambitions and do not hesitate to abandon them the moment they seem not to subserve their interests Their conception of truth and falsehood, of honesty and dishonesty, also undergoes a change in accordance with this criterion For example, to the materialists, truth turns into falsehood if it comes into conflict with their aims and objectives, and falsehood occupies the lighted niche of truth if it helps them to further themselves. For them, honesty is the right code of conduct if by practising it something is gained Dishonesty will be equally welcome if it pays more. Their ideal, in the words of Shakespeare, is· 'Let me if not by birth, have lands by wit: All with me's meet that I can fashion fit'

In the bridge game of materialism, the trump card which every materialist holds in his hands is 'no criterion for myself, all criteria are for others' And the tricks he plays to complete his rubber are: 'truth is not for myself, but my temper is for the liar,' 'corruption is for me, but honesty is for my neighbour.' But even the materialist finds this outlook in the long run to be self-contradictory How is it possible to live a life of falsehood and dishonesty but at the same time to expect truth and honesty from others? This self-contradictory outlook cannot sustain itself and therefore it cannot be upheld The belief which is indispensable in our dealings with others is. 'what is good for others must be good for me too,' and 'I must do unto others as I would others do unto me.' If it be necessary for the smooth sailing of our own boat that others should manifest truth, honesty, and love, is it not equally incumbent upon us to manifest the same qualities for the proper maintenance of harmonious relations with others?

This is the reason why even in the very midst of materialism, we cannot completely divorce ourselves from truth, non-violence, love, non-attachment, self-surrender, and sacrifice. Truly these

qualities must remain a part and parcel of our being howsoever rank materialistic we may be Regardless of any knowledge, desire, or effort on our part we invariably discover that truth, love, and goodness are triumphantly marching ahead leaving falsehood, hatred, and corruption far behind. The hound of goodness is swifter than the stag of evil. Why is it so? It is so because these elements are permanent, eternal, universal, and cannot be separated from our being despite the worst influences of materialism. It is these spiritual elements which lie buried deeply in the very foundation of the world structure The Vedic saint declared: 'On truth stands this earth '* In pronouncing this he indeed revealed the reality which could not be shattered or falsified through the course of thousands of years of the materialistic epoch

It is undeniable that some of the elements proclaimed by materialists in the composition of the world structure are factual But the uniqueness of the Vedic philosophers lies in apprehending some other basic and fundamental elements. These if withdrawn from the world will lead to the collapse of its structure like the house that was built on the sand by the sea. It is these philosophers who gave birth to Vedic culture, it is they who made these elements the basis of their scheme of life. Readers will have a glimpse of these elements in the course of this book.

The difference between a number of books on this subject and this book lies in the fact that whereas the former discuss Indian culture in its outer aspects, the latter is an attempt to discuss it in its inner aspect. For instance, while most of the books confine themselves to the study of its time, its origin, and its historical influence in different parts of the world, this book explains its inner meaning, its scientific, psychological, and spiritual background It also explains the outlook of India's saints and sages towards life and the way they had translated into action the main elements of Vedic culture as visualised by them

A significant feature of this book is that singly by itself neither materialism nor spiritualism has been advocated to be the correct approach to life. Rather it is maintained throughout the treatment of the subject that true religion and true philosophy lie in an all-embracing approach Thus it presents a synthesis of materialism and spiritualism. Several important Western philosophical and

* सत्येनोत्तभिता भूमिः (ऋग्वेद, १०/८५/१)

psychological concepts have also been synthesized with the Vedic views It is these contributions that make the approach original and pragmatic The generally prevalent view that East is East and West is West and never shall the twain be met has been transformed into the fact that both their melodies can be harmonized. This alone can ensure the twentieth century pilgrim h s progress along the earthly journey

We are indebted to Mr M. D. David for his Introductory Note and many useful suggestions that have enhanced the utility of the work

Our grateful thanks are due to Mrs Chandravati Lakhanpal who has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement; Mr. & Mrs Vijay Krishna Lakhanpal for their help in the course of the preparation of the book; Mrs J. H. Taraporevala and Mr Russi J Taraporevala for their active interest and co-operation, Mr J A. Lobo, Mr S. D David, Miss D. H. Sahiar, for undertaking and executing certain works pertaining to the book; and lastly the staff of Leaders Press Private Limited for all their care and attention in the printing of the work

SATYAVRATA SIDDHANTALANKAR

S J TARAPOREVALA

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AN EIGHT PAGE FOLDER CONTAINING ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE YOGIC ASANAS

This is the culture that hast and wilt time defy,
As surely as the rock resist'th the billows and the sky;
For it teacheth thee O Man, that no matter where thou art or what thou hast,
If thou followest its three-fold path, Enjoyment—Non-Attachment—Renunciation, thou too might'st be forever blest.

PROLOGUE

THE curtain for the pageant of this culture rose in India with its primary scenes coinciding with the first chirping of the birds from out of the forests of this holy land Since then many have been the performances staged by it through the span of time and in the expanse of space Each performance can rightly be looked upon as a lever or the motivating force for its drama to move on and survive to this day Its various concepts have crystallized themselves into notes which have been played upon the flute of history. And the sounds of its music are known to have been heard from flowering rosebeds of prosperity to thorns, thistles, and briars of adversity: through glen, thicket, wood, and dale : from fields of battle where men have waded through blood to the peace and quiet of a winter's fireside.

It is therefore befitting in the present context that the torch of our investigations be first spotlighted on the existing books, records, and other evidences which have survived through the centuries These should be considered to be the bridges constructed over the waterways of time on which the traffic of the knowledge of antiquity has wheeled itself to the present day.

Antiquity of the Vedas

According to Max Muller, the great Indologist, the Vedas are the oldest books in the library of mankind Writing about the Rig Veda Sir W W Hunter said that the age of this venerable hymnal was unknown

In Homa Yasht of Zend Avesta (1 24) there is a reference to Homa who deposed Kereshani from his sovereignty The latter's lust of power had so much increased that he forbade Atharva's repetition of *Apam Avishtish*[1] in the former's kingdom. Dr. Haug

[1] शन्नो देवी अभिष्टये आपो भवन्तु पीतये श योरभिसूयन्तु न । (यजुर्वेद, ३६-१२)
The hymn Shanno Devi *Rabhishtaye Apo Bhavantu Pitaye* is the twelfth *Mantra* of the thirty-sixth chapter of the present Yajur Veda But in Patanjali's *Maha Bhashya in Paspashanhik* (first chapter), where mention has been made of each of the four Vedas by citing their first hymns, Shanno Devi *Rabhishtaye Apo Bhavantu Pitaye* has been mentioned as representing the Atharva Veda. This shows that at Patanjali's time Atharva Veda began with the hymn Shanno Devi *Rabhishtaye Apo Bhavantu Pitaye* It appears, therefore, that Kareshani's

Contd

says that in this context Atharva and *Apam Avishtish* refer to the Atharva Veda. The first hymn (*Mantra*) of the Atharva Veda is Shanno Devi *Abhishtaye Apah* which is the reverse of *Apam Avishtish* referred to in the Avesta. The text here seems to refer to the controversy raging between the two branches of Aryans, that is, the one which settled down in Persia and the other which crossed over to India through the Indus (Sindhu). Both were nursing animosity against each other, for reasons best known to themselves The result was that the Vedic deity Indra was regarded as a God by the Indian Aryans and was called a demon by the Persian Aryans, whereas Ahura (Asura) was called a demon by the Indians and a God by the Persians. If Zoroastrianism were to be placed at 2000 B.C as has been done by some historians, then the reference in the Avesta to the struggle between the Vedic and the Persian branches of Aryans must take us to a much earlier period with regard to the antiquity of the Vedas For the struggle referred to must have taken a precious good time to take a virulent form amongst people who belonged to one and the same stock

B G. Tilak basing his calculations on astronomical data available in the Vedas as well as on the description therein of a continuous dawn, which is a phenomenon of the Arctic region, carries the date of the Vedas to 8000 B.C.

N B Pavagi relying on geological data has taken his calculations to 70 million B C for the origin of the Vedas.

A C Das in his *Rigvedic India* quotes descriptions from the Vedas which, according to geological hypothesis, could have belonged to the Miocene or the Pliocene epoch. The age of these epochs is to be computed backwards from the present day by some hundreds of thousands if not millions of years

Scope of Vedic Literature

Despite the antiquity of the Vedas accepted by the Eastern as well as the Western scholars, the Vedic period extends from the date of the origin of the Vedas to the time of the Bhagawad Gita During these centuries, Vedic culture grew, took its shape, developed, and spread far and wide both within as well as outside India. Vast is the literature which contributed to the growth of this

prohibition of the recital of *Apam Avishtish* in his kingdom reflected the antagonism between the two branches of Aryans, one representing the Persians and the other the Atharvans or the followers of the Atharva Veda.

culture. The fountainhead of this culture lies in the Vedas which contain the germs of all the concepts dominating the individual and social life of the Vedic people. But we shall also include all the literary works that grew up through the course of years up to the Epic period, that is, the time at which the Gita was written, in the category of Vedic literature For in most of them we come across collections and lengthy expositions of Vedic ideology, and in Milton's words they 'preserve as a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them'

The principal constituents of the literature which contributed to the growth of Vedic culture may be classified as follows :

1. the four Vedas,
2. nine Brahmana Granthas,
3. eleven important Upanishads,
4. six Vedangas,
5. four Upa-Vedas,
6. six Darshanas, and
7. the Bhagawad Gita.

The Four Vedas

The Vedas are four in number, namely :

Rig Veda,
Yajur Veda,
Sama Veda, and
Atharva Veda

The word *Veda* means knowledge These Vedas are regarded as the repositories of Aryan wisdom They are called *Shruti* which means the wisdom transmitted from the teacher to the taught or from sire to son by means of oral instruction According to Vedic tradition the Vedas are said to have been revealed at the beginning of creation to four Rishis

Classification and Contents of the Vedas

Tradition has it that the present classification into four Vedas was done by Maharshi Veda Vyas as originally the Vedic wisdom was embodied in stray hymns (*Mantras*) These *Mantras* were in poetry, prose, and song After classification the hymns in poetry, prose, and song were called Rig, Yajur, and Sama Veda respectively, and the Atharva Veda was a miscellaneous composition. As the hymns were classified into three categories, namely, prose,

poetry, and song, the knowledge contained in the Vedas is called *Trayee Vidya*. *Trayee* means three, *Vidya* means knowledge. Veda Vyas was only a compiler and due to this compilation the Vedas were called the Samhitas which means compilations But the Samhitas were not very accurate compilations with regard to these three forms of literary expression in which the Vedic wisdom was contained Thus even after this classification each Veda may contain poetry, prose, or song though principally Rig Veda contains poetry, Yajur Veda contains prose, and Sama Veda contains song Atharva Veda is a miscellaneous composition

As regards the contents of the Vedas, Rig Veda primarily deals with *Jnyana* (knowledge), Yajur Veda with *Karma* (action), and Sama Veda with *Upasana* (worship). Atharva Veda deals with miscellaneous subjects *Jnyana, Karma,* and *Upasana* is the mental triad representing knowing, willing, and feeling which are the three principal functions of the mind In Vedic terminology we say that Rig Veda deals with *Jnyana Kanda,* Yajur Veda with *Karma Kanda,* and Sama Veda with *Upasana Kanda* The word *Kanda* means a section or a branch of knowledge

Nine Brahmana Granthas

After the four Vedas come the Brahmana Granthas These represent that portion of the Vedic literature which contains the rules for the employment or incantation of hymns at the various sacrifices (*Yajnyas*) They also dilate upon the origin of these *Yajnyas* and contain detailed explanations with occasional lengthy illustrations in the shape of legends, stories, and parables Some authors regard the Brahmana Granthas as part of the Vedas but actually they are explanations of the Vedas Each of the four Vedas has its own Brahmana Granthas. Grantha means a book The principal Brahmana Granthas are as follows :

1 Aitareya,
2 Ashvalayana and Kaushitaki,
3 Sankhyayana,
4 Shatapatha,
5 Panchvinsha,
6 Shadvinsha,
7. Tandya,
8 Jaiminiya, and
9 Gopatha.

The principal Brahmana Grantha belonging to the Rig Veda is Aitareya consisting of 40 chapters The author of Aitareya was Mahidas, a non-*Brahmana*, born of Etara which means the other, the different, and in modern terminology the outcaste For a non-*Brahmana* to occupy the position of one who could undertake an exposition of the Vedas is a living testimony of the social equality that was prevalent in the Vedic Age Besides Aitareya, Ashvalayana, Kaushitaki, and Sankhyayana also belong to the Rig Veda Shatapatha belongs to the Yajur Veda Those linked to the Sama Veda are Panchvinsha, Shadvinsha, Tandya, Jaiminiya And the Gopatha pertains to the Atharva Veda

It may be mentioned here that the Yajur Veda has two parts, namely, Shukla and Krishna Shukla Yajur Veda contains only the hymns or *Mantras*, whereas Krishna Yajur Veda contains the interpretations of its hymns and rituals beside the hymns themselves The principal Brahmana Grantha belonging to Shukla Yajur Veda is Shatapatha This is an encyclopaedic voluminous work containing one hundred chapters The author of this volume is Yajnyavalkya who is very often referred to in the Upanishads

Eleven Upanishads or Aranyakas

Next to the Brahmana Granthas come the Upanishads or the Aranyakas. Upanishads or Aranyakas are the two names given to the same class of Vedic literature Some authors have treated the Aranyakas as separate writings from the Upanishads, but actually the Aranyakas are those Upanishads which were propounded in the forests This fact is corroborated by the title Brihadaranyaka Upanishad It is an Upanishad but is called an Aranyaka. In Sanskrit *Aranya* means a forest The word Upanishad is derived from the two prefixes, *Upa* meaning near, and *Ni* meaning very. The root *Shad* means to sit The word as a whole refers to that knowledge which is derived by sitting at the feet of the preceptor. According to Shankaracharya the root *Shad* also means to destroy, and so the word also means to destroy ignorance by revealing the knowledge of the Supreme Spirit and thereby cutting off the bondage to earthly existence

Though the Upanishadic literature has increased in size by leaps and bounds, and the total number of Upanishads is one hundred and eight, there are only eleven Upanishads that merit special

mention and attention. They are :

1. Isha,
2. Kena,
3 Katha,
4 Prashna,
5 Mundaka,
6. Mandukya,
7 Taittiriya,
8 Aitareya,
9. Chhandogya,
10. Brihadaranyaka, and
11. Shvetashvatara.

These Upanishads are a part of the Brahmana Granthas. And it is through the relevant Brahmana Granthas that some of these Upanishads are connected with any one of the four Vedas But certain Upanishads are directly a part of the respective Veda, e g , the Isha Upanishad is the 40th chapter of the Yajur Veda Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is the last chapter of the Shatapatha Brahmana, which is linked to the Shukla Yajur Veda. *Brihad* means great, *Aranyaka* means belonging to the forest The teachings enunciated in a great, thick forest inhabited by the Vedic Rishis are incorporated in this Upanishad. Herein Yajnyavalkya is the principal participating exponent. Katha, Shvetashvatara, and Taittiriya Upanishads are a part and parcel of the Brahmana Granthas belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda Aitareya Upanishad is a part of the Aitareya Brahmana Grantha which is linked to the Rig Veda Kena and Chhandogya Upanishads belong to the Brahmana Granthas which are connected with the Sama Veda. Mundaka, Mandukya, and Prashna Upanishads belong to the Brahmana Granthas related to the Atharva Veda

One may ask: what is the difference between the contents of the Brahmana Granthas in general and that of the Upanishads in particular if the latter are a part and parcel of the former ? In order to answer this question, we must understand that the exponents of the Vedas or the authors of Vedic literature belonged to two different schools of thought The first school believed in what we may rightly consider to be the ritualistic interpretation of the Vedas This school indulged in the performance of elaborate sacrifices or *Yajnyas* with the head of the family playing the role of the host (*Yajamana*). They engaged priests or *Purohitas* to

perform the ceremony with the object of propitiating the deities with oblations. This they thought would enable them to attain heaven or to fulfil their cherished desires The second school believed that such performances were meaningless rituals and were of no avail whatsoever in the realization of the final goal of life. It is due to this co-existence of both these schools of thought that the Brahmana Granthas contained both the versions, the ritualistic as well as the philosophical. For the Brahmana Granthas were not the product of one author but they were the collected writings of different Rishis who belonged to the one or the other of these two schools The philosophical school belongs to the Upanishads or Aranyakas.

The main teachings of the Upanishads are that macrocosmically the world of matter has the Supreme Spirit animating it, and microcosmically the physical body has the individual soul breathing life into it. The ultimate reality is neither the world of matter nor the physical body, but the Spirit Supreme in the cosmos and the individual soul in the body with its senses The ultimate goal of human life is not the attainment of heaven or *Swarga* as visualized by the ritualists for this is non-existent Rather the ultimate aspiration of human existence is the realization of the separate existence of the Supreme Spirit (*Brahma*) from the world of matter and the individual soul (*Atma*) from the body and its senses Thus though the Upanishadic thought came into conflict with the ritualistic aspirations of the Brahmana Granthas, both the schools continued to sway the minds of men of the Vedic age, and still continue to flourish in Indian thought.

Six Vedangas

After the four Vedas, nine Brahmana Granthas, and eleven Upanishads, there developed another branch of Vedic literature known as Vedangas *Veda* means the scripture, *Anga* means a limb. Thus Vedanga means the limb of the Veda-body. Vedangas are certain classes of works or treatises, which are regarded as auxiliary members of the Vedas. They are designed to aid in the correct pronunciation and interpretation of the texts as well as the employment of the right *Mantras* in the respective ceremonies They are six in number and are known as :

1. Shiksha (the science of proper articulation and pronunciation),
2 Chhanda (the science of prosody),

3 Vyakarana (grammar),
4. Nirukta (etymological explanations of difficult Vedic words),
5 Jyotisha (astronomy), and
6 Kalpa (ritual, institutional, or ceremonial).

For our purpose the Kalpa is the most important of the Vedangas because it stipulates and amplifies the personal duties of both an individual as well as the institutions pertaining to the family and the society The Kalpas are also called Sutras. There are three broad categories of these Sutras They are :

1 Shrauta Kalpa or Shrauta Sutras,
2 Grihya Kalpa or Grihya Sutras, and
3. Dharma Kalpa or Dharma Sutras.

Shrauta Sutras are abbreviated versions of rituals giving in a succinct manner the detailed expositions of the Brahmana Granthas The Grihya Sutras contain details of the rituals or the sixteen *Sanskaras* that one was expected to perform from birth to death at various stages in one's life Dharma Sutras are expositions of social relationships coupled with the different forms of social classifications, such as the *Varna* and the *Ashrama* systems.

Four Upa-Vedas

There is a mention in ancient Sanskrit literature about the four Upa-Vedas or the writings which were deemed to be subordinate to the Vedas. Each of these four Upa-Vedas is attached to one of the four Vedas The four Upa-Vedas are:—

1 Ayurveda (medicine),
2 Dhanurveda (military science),
3 Gandharvaveda (music), and
4 Shilpa or Sthapatyaveda (mechanics or architecture).

Thus was attached the Ayurveda to Rig Veda, Dhanurveda to Yajur Veda, Gandharvaveda to Sama Veda, and Shilpa or Sthapatyaveda to Atharva Veda

The Charaka and Sushruta which are existent today amongst the books of medicine were composed in the post Buddhist period. They contain references to other books on medicine from which they have imbibed certain sections of their knowledge and the Ayurveda is mentioned as one of the Upa-Vedas. Thus it is obvious that some other books must have existed in the pre-Buddhist period which are no longer in existence today Similarly other books on military science, mechanics, and music must have existed at some

time as subordinate branches of the Vedas but these too seem to have been the victims of the ravages of time.

Six Darshanas or Systems of Philosophy

These six systems of philosophy constitute another important branch of Vedic-cum-Sanskrit literature. They are as follows:

1. Vaisheshika Darshana,
2. Nyaya Darshana,
3. Sankhya Darshana,
4. Yoga Darshana,
5. Mimamsa Darshana, and
6. Vedanta Darshana.

The above were the theistic or *Astika* philosophical schools. There was one atheistic school known as *Nastika,* Lokayata, or Charvaka These philosophical schools have formulated their own independent theories regarding the origin of the universe and the basic eternal entities

The Vaisheshika school was founded by Kanada and his doctrine was that the world had originated from atoms (*Paramanus*).

The founder of the Nyaya school was Gautama according to whom the world of matter was constituted of the five elements, namely, earth, fire, water, air, and sky or ether

The exponent of the Sankhya school was Kapila who, though not an atheist, dispensed with the necessity of postulating the existence of God and propounded the dualistic theory of matter (*Prakriti*) and soul (*Purusha*). It would be no exaggeration to say that he anticipated Herbert Spencer and other physical evolutionists more than 600 years before Christ He propounded the theory of physical evolution proceeding from *Avyakta* to *Vyakta,* from the undefined to the defined, from homogeneity to heterogeneity. His concept was that *Prakriti* was inert but was animated by *Purusha. Purusha* was to use *Prakriti* as a vehicle for its emancipation. The goal of every human being was not to live the life of subservience to the world of matter but to make use of matter as a master employs and avails himself of the services of a servant. These concepts formed the rocks upon which were raised the structural foundations of Vedic culture. These concepts were once again elaborately amplified by Shri Krishna in the celestial songs of the Bhagawad Gita

The Yoga system of philosophy was established by Patanjali and is regarded as a counterpart of the Sankhya system. The former deals with the spiritual and the latter with the material aspect of the various human and cosmic problems The chief aim of Yoga philosophy is to teach the means by which the human soul may be divinised Meditation is laid down as the chief means of securing this end. And for this elaborate rules are prescribed whereby the practice of concentration by the mind can be facilitated.

The school of Mimamsa philosophy was founded by Jaimini It concerned itself chiefly with the correct interpretation of the various rituals of the Vedas and the settlement of dubious points with regard to the Vedic texts It is also called Purva Mimamsa in contradistinction to the Vedanta school of philosophy which is sometimes designated as Uttara Mimamsa But to avoid confusion it is best to call it as Mimamsa Darshana and the Vedanta as the Vedanta Darshana

The last of the six systems of Vedic philosophy and culture is the Vedanta founded by Veda Vyas It is called Vedanta because it is based on the Upanishads which are the philosophical-cum-explanatory part to the Vedas It represents the popular pantheistic creed, for it regards the whole world as being synthetically derived from one eternal principle, namely, *Brahma* or the Supreme Spirit.

An Illustration to Show the Branches of knowledge that Existed in the Vedic Period

In Chhandogya Upanishad (7 1 1)[1] there is a reference to Narada who had approached Sanat Kumara for being initiated into *Atma Vidya* When the preceptor asked him as to how far he had proceeded in his studies, he stated his proficiency in the following subjects:

1 Rig Veda,
2 Yajur Veda,
3. Sama Veda,
4. Atharva Veda,
5. Puranas (encyclopaedic literature on miscellaneous subjects),
6 *Pitri Vidya* (nursing),
7. *Rashi Vidya* (mathematics),

[1] ऋग्वेद भगवोऽध्येमि यजुर्वेदं सामवेदमाथर्वण चतुर्थमितिहासपुराण पञ्चमं वेदाना वेद पित्र्य राशि दैवं निधि वाकोवाक्यमेकायनं देवविद्या ब्रह्मविद्या भूतविद्या क्षत्रविद्या नक्षत्रविद्या सर्पदेवजनविद्या एतद् भगवोऽध्येमि। (छान्दोग्य, ७–१–२)

8. *Daiva Vidya* (extra-mundane science),
9. *Nidhi Vidya* (economics),
10. *Vakyo-Vakya* (logic and philosophy),
11. *Ekayatana* (ethics or politics),
12. *Deva Vidya* (knowledge regarding the deities),
13 *Brahma Vidya* (knowledge regarding the ultimate existence),
14 *Bhoota Vidya* (physics),
15. *Kshatra Vidya* (military science),
16. *Nakshatra Vidya* (astronomy),
17 *Sarpa Vidya* (toxicology), and
18 *Deva Jan Vidya* (psychology of the upper, middle, and lower classes).

Narada having recounted these innumerable branches of knowledge in which he had attained proficiency said that despite the fact that he had learnt so much he was only a *Mantravid* (one who had the knowledge of books), and not an *Atmavid* (one who has the knowledge of *Atma*).[1] His purpose in approaching Sanat Kumara was to acquire that knowledge which leads one to the realization of *Atmic* experience It is this knowledge which is the basis of Vedic culture.

Bhagawad Gita

The Gita represents the culminating peak of Aryan wisdom. Indian philosophy and culture reach their zenith of glory in the message that the Gita holds out to the world. The word Gita is also used to connote certain writings in verse or in the form of a dialogue These writings are devoted to certain religious and theosophical discussions and doctrines, such as Shiva Gita, Rama Gita, etc But the prevalent consensus of opinion especially confines the use of the word Gita to Shri Krishna's Bhagawad Gita

The Gita is an integral part of the great epic *Mahabharata*. This epic describes the rivalries and contests that took place between the sons of Pandu and those of Dhritarashtra. According to tradition, Krishna was the charioteer of Arjuna in the war that was being waged between the Kauravas and the Pandavas on the battlefield of Kurukshetra When the bugles of war were being sounded Arjuna asked Krishna to drive his chariot between the

[1] सोऽहं भगवो मन्त्रविदेवास्मि नात्मवित् ।
श्रुत ह्येव मे भगवद् दृशेभ्यस्तरति शोकमात्मवित् । (छान्दोग्य, ७–१–३)

two armies so as to enable him to have a close view of those whom he had to fight against When Krishna placed him there in the very midst of the two arrayed armies what did he see ? He saw in the opposing hosts his uncles and grand-uncles, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers and cousins, sons and grandsons, friends, fathers-in-law, and well-wishers Seeing all these nearest and dearest ones ready to be engaged in a life and death struggle against each other, he set aside his bow and arrows and refused to fight His head was heavy and his heart was overcome with sorrow.

This was the state of Arjuna which prompted Krishna to address to him a philosophical discourse which not only brought him round but also enthused him to fight It is this conversation between Krishna and Arjuna that is embodied in the eighteen chapters of the Gita It is hard to accept that a battlefied could be an appropriate place for such an elevated and elaborate a discourse nor can one believe under normal circumstances that it was given on such an occasion But if we view life as a great battlefield and every duty doubting individual as a wavering Arjuna, no better exhortation can be said to be available in the recorded files of human wisdom than the one we find in the classical songs of the Bhagawad Gita. It can rightly claim its place amongst the half-a-dozen paramount religious and philosophical classics of the world Its study is a *sine qua non* for a true appreciation of the cultural heritage of the Vedas

It may be recalled that the Brahmana Granthas are the ritualistic interpretation of the Vedas but the Upanishads discard ritualism and lay emphasis on the philosophical and spiritual side of life. About the Gita it has been said that if the Upanishads were to be symbolised as cows, the Gita was the milk drawn out by the milkman Krishna from the Upanishads.[1] Thus the Gita is only an amplification and exposition of the teachings of the Upanishads and it carries every Upanishadic concept to its logical conclusion

According to the Gita the soul is never born nor does it ever die; it is eternal and everlasting. Even though the body be slain, the soul is not. Similar to a man who discards worn out clothes only to put on new ones, the embodied soul which casts off a worn out body does so only to enter into another which will form a new

[1] सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः ।
पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्ध गीतामृत महत् ॥

seam in its everlasting garment of existence[1] The soul is incapable of being mutilated; it is proof against fire, impervious to water, and unaffected by the impact of the outside world[2] It is the body that perishes, not the soul which is the imperishable in the midst of the perishable.

Lest the philosophy of the soul should lead one to discard every earthly conception of existence as was done by the followers of the Sankhya school of philosophy, the Gita tried to synthesize Sankhya with Yoga or the philosophy of action.[3] Thus the Gita has evolved the doctrine of a healthy combination of enjoyment with renunciation. We shall have ample occasion and opportunity to discuss these concepts in the course of the book

Another synthetic approach of the Gita is visible in the way it has attempted to reconcile the conventional ritualism and philosophical spiritualism.[4] The Upanishads are very vehement in denouncing the institutional and ritualistic interpretation of the Vedas as stated in the Brahmana Granthas, but solely emphasize their spiritual interpretation. They discarded the *Yajnyas* which had not only dominated but had even overshadowed the lives of the men and women of those times The Gita struck a balance between ritualism and spiritualism by interpreting the former in terms of the latter. *Yajnya,* according to the Gita, is not the exoteric ritualistic performance but an esoteric process going on continuously within ourselves.

And lastly, the most outstanding contribution of the Gita to Indian cultural thought is the emphatic enunciation of the Vedic concept of doing one's duty without that expectation of a reward. The Yajur Veda has said: '*Tena tyaktena bhunjithah*', that is, live

[1] वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्यन्यानि सयाति नवानि देही ।।
(गीता, २–२२)

[2] नैन छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैन दहति पावक : ।
न चैन क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोपयति मारुत : ।। (गीता, २–२३)

[3] साख्ययोगौ पृथग्बाला: प्रवदन्ति न पण्डिता : ।
एकमप्यास्थित. सम्यगुभयोर्विन्दते फलम् ।।
यत्साख्यै: प्राप्यते स्थान तद्योगैरपि गम्यते ।
एक साख्यं च योग च य: पश्यति स पश्यति ।। (गीता, ५–४, ५)

[4] प्लवा ह्येते अदृढा यज्ञरूपा अष्टादशोक्तमवर येषु कर्म ।
एतच्छ्रेयो येऽभिनन्दन्ति मूढा जरामृत्युं ते पुनरेवापि यान्ति ।। (मुण्डक, १–७)

in the world with a sense of non-attachment The Gita has dilated upon this theme and has made it the fulcrum of its teachings of *Nishkama Karma* or disinterested action. Leaving every other consideration aside we may say that for the contribution of this thought alone the Gita truly deserves the unique commandeering position that it has earned in the philosophical classics of the world.

We have included the Gita in the category of Vedic literature because, in the main, its approach with regard to the fundamental concepts dealt with by it are in conformity with the Vedic view of life. These concepts are· the existence of a Supreme Spirit directing the movements of the universe, the eternal nature of the soul to which the body and its organs are subservient, the supremacy of the path of action with desirelessness as its motive force, and the complete self-surrender in every walk of life to the Will Divine

Though Vedic literature is very vast, we have confined ourselves to certain portions of it which fall within the purview of the Vedic period because our main purpose is to deal with the heritage of Vedic culture It is hoped that a preliminary knowledge of the main constituents of this literature will go a long way in enabling the reader to appreciate its contribution towards the development of this culture

Milton has said . 'a good Book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life', and that 'Books are not absolutely dead things but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul whose progeny they are ' It is in this light that we shall try to interpret and explain the significance of the philosophical concepts and social institutions recorded in Vedic literature As has already been stated this has survived from ancient and immemorial times to this day bequeathing to us the heritage of Vedic culture. This will enable us to realize the depth and intensity of the master Vedic minds who guided society along the roads of prosperity, peace, and contentment

CHAPTER I

THE CENTRAL THOUGHT OF VEDIC CULTURE

INDIA has achieved independence after years of foreign domination. We have so far followed the path shown to us by others, but are now free to chart out our course and shape our own destiny. What will be this course? This is for time alone to tell. It is, however, possible to indicate on the basis of our traditional thought and literature, the path that we had followed and the direction of our movement for thousands of years before we lost our moorings.

It is the firm belief of those who are acquainted with the essentials of Vedic culture that the welfare of India as well as of mankind at large demands the pursual of the same old path shown to us centuries ago by our saints and sages. If this is done India will again become the torch bearer and the crown of the world, as she once was, shining forth in all her radiant and pristine glory. But what was this path? How can we know it? In order to be able to understand the way of this path we shall have to discover the central thought of Vedic culture

Our country in the prime of her youth had given birth to a culture which was and still is different from the other cultures of the world. There was a time when the open air of the forests, the shady trees, and the verdure all around, pregnant with subdued silence, occupied the same pride of place as that which the crowded and the noisy towns studded with skyscrapers hold in the modern age The culture which then developed was one of those who were constantly in communion with nature in all its variegated hues and resplendent glory. The talk of the day would be that 'this Rishi lives in the Dandakaranya,' or 'that Rishi lives in Brihadaranya.' Dandakaranya and Brihadaranya were the names of the forest habitations of the Rishis of old. There were, no doubt, towns and cities in the Vedic age, but the forests were regarded as the centres of culture from which inspiration radiated in all directions. The cities were encircled by these forests in which the saints lived They lived in their forest hutments and devoted their time to meditation and communion with the Spirit Supreme

We shall have occasion to discuss this culture of the forests in the

course of the present work, but since there are some who feel diffident in using the term 'culture' for a culture evolved by the forest-saints of old, it is but appropriate to clearly understand the difference between 'Culture' and 'Civilization.'

Civilization is Material but Culture is Spiritual

Civilization and culture are fundamentally distinct from each other; the two can be said to be poles apart. Civilization refers to the body, culture to the soul: civilization is external, culture internal; civilization can be said to be the name given to material progress, culture relates to spiritual advancement. Railways, telegraphs, radios, cars, aeroplanes, ships are the emblems of civilization; non-violence, truth, contentment, self-control, and self-abnegation are the symbols of culture.

Let it, however, be noted that the concept of culture differs from country to country, and different cultures attach various shades of importance to the basic principles such as non-violence, truth, contentment, self-control, etc. There is also a possibility of the existence of certain cultures which may have violence, falsehood, discontent, licentiousness as their fundamentals. The latter, however, should be excluded from the sphere of cultures. It is natural that a culture propounded by those who have devoted their lives to the pursuit of non-violence, truth, non-stealing, self-control, and non-attachment will differ from the one propounded by others who indulge in violence, falsehood, stealing, licentiousness and aggrandisement. Whilst the first type of culture is a sublime culture, the second one, though technically called a culture, is a vulgar culture and hence in discussions on this subject it should be designated by some term other than culture.

Civilization, on the other hand, has nothing to do with these pairs of opposite qualities, such as, violence and non-violence, truth and untruth, stealing and non-stealing, self-control and licentiousness, aggrandisement and self-abnegation A man may be said to be civilized if he is fairly comfortably off and has a bungalow, a car, a refrigerator, a tape recorder, two to three servants, irrespective of what he is in his personal life. It does not matter even if he be a liar, a drunkard, or a libertine, he is none the less without dispute a civilized man. But can he be called a cultured man? If he claims to have any culture, it can only be a negation of culture for such a man gives preference to violence over non-violence

(*Ahimsa*), to falsehood over truth (*Satya*), to stealing over non-stealing (*Asteya*), to licentiousness over self-control (*Brahmacharya*), and to aggrandisement over self-abnegation (*Aparigraha*).

The culture which is based on violence, falsehood, discontentment, licentiousness, and aggrandisement is not a culture; in fact, it is a negation of the very elements that go to constitute the concept of culture. And so it is that a civilized man can be most uncultured, as well as a cultured man can be most uncivilized. Both the terms can be used exclusively of each other.

Civilization is material, it depends upon outward or physical, material things; culture is spiritual, it has its roots in the inner life, the life of the spirit.

Rishi Vishwamitra lived in huts made of leaves, of grass, and of creepers. Rishi Vasishtha covered his body with pieces of skin and hides or untanned leather. Shri Krishna used only a chariot that was drawn by horses. Where do these great men of old stand, judged strictly from the norm of civilization or from the standards of the modern man who lives in apartments, wears terelene shirts and trousers, smokes cigars, and travels by aeroplanes? But viewed from the perspective of even the highest standards of culture they remain unequalled because they devoted themselves to self-perfection, to the cultivation of man as man, and to the welfare of humanity at large.

Civilization and Culture can Exist both Jointly as well as Severally

It is possible that a nation might be at the zenith of its material achievements and its people might also be non-violent, unaggressive, truthful, contented, pure, chaste, and ungreedy. This is ideal, and under such circumstances both the culture as well as the civilization of the nation can be said to be of a high standard.

It is also possible that a nation might be materially matured but spiritually a babe. In such a case cars will be in abundance but they might be used for dacoity, radios will be in plenty but only vulgar songs will be relayed over them. Obviously the civilization of such a nation will be high but its culture definitely low.

It is perfectly possible that a nation might be at the lowest rung of the ladder of material progress but may be standing on the highest pinnacle of spirituality. The people of such a nation will be sharing the griefs of others, sacrificing their own interests for the welfare of their neighbours, and leading a life completely free from

falsehood, dishonesty, corruption, etc.; and yet they might travel by bullock carts instead of cars, live in huts instead of bungalows. A nation of such persons might be regarded backward with respect to civilization but will be reverenced as the fountainhead of culture. All nations will bow to her for her cultural supremacy.

Which of these two can be said to be occupying the higher place, civilization or culture ? The answer is that the scales tilt in favour of culture, because it has its foundation in non-violence, love, truth, honesty, contentment, self-control, non-aggrandisement, and self-abnegation. The world today is not so much in need of the railways, the telegraphs and the radios as it is in need of non-violence, brotherhood, truth, honesty, self-control, benevolence, and non-attachment It is better for a nation to have both, civilization as well as culture, but if a choice has to be made between the two, the vacillating needle of the compass must point towards culture. This is what Franklin Roosevelt meant when he stated: 'In order that civilization might survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships.'

Civilization can be sacrificed to safeguard culture but culture cannot be placed at the altar of civilization. Body can be sacrificed to save the soul, not the soul to save the body.

Culture is Born out of a Central Dominant Idea

We have seen the difference between culture and civilization. We have also explained the true significance of culture. But how is a culture born ? Any culture must have its origin in the central or dominant idea or thought of a community, the concept around which the whole of its life revolves, the polar star in the constellation of its thoughts. All the currents and cross currents in the life of a community are guided and inspired by this central thought. Any community devoid of such a central thought has no culture worth the name, a community with no central thought to guide it as a beacon-light in its onward march to the promised land becomes one amongst the many. This central thought is to any culture what the soul is to the body; and just as the soul is responsible for the life in the body, so also this thought is responsible for the dynamism in the culture. The strength or the weakness of a culture will and must ultimately depend on the force or subduedness of this central thought. The more powerful the central thought, the more vigorous and animating will be the culture emanating from it.

Various cultures, not in multiples of one but thousands, have come and vanished from the earth. What was the reason for this? This was so because either they had no central thought to guide them, or if they had any, it gradually weakened itself and hence could not sustain them. The cultures of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon were thus annihilated in the absence of any single dominant and vigorous central thought. They died their natural death because there was nothing to keep them alive. These nations still exist but the thought which had given them birth, the idea which had made them what they were centuries ago, is no more. There they stand like the body without the soul, lifeless, and to use Shelley's words: 'Nothing beside remains: round the decay Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, The lone and level sands stretch far away.'

A community which has no such central thought for which it lives and dies will bow even before those whom it has vanquished, if this other community has a powerful central thought to guide it. A nation which has such a central thought to sustain it will not bow before a conqueror even in the event of defeat.

India remained under the yoke of foreign rule for centuries Could it affect her soul ? No, never; because it was only the body and not the soul of India which had accepted the domination. Why was this so ? It was so because there was some dynamic and vigorous thought inspiring the Indian culture which could not be brushed aside, nor crushed, nor covered up totally with a dab of the fresh paint of domination

The Central Thought of Vedic Culture

This brings us to the question: what was this central thought? The central thought or concept of this nation had been sung in Vedic hymns by the saints and sages of this land, taught by the Munis in the Upanishads, and propounded by Shri Krishna in the Bhagawad Gita

According to this thought, macrocosmically, *Prakriti* (matter) exists but it is not all; there is some spiritual reality behind it which animates it and is called *Parama Atma tattva* (world consciousness) or the universal life principle. Microcosmically, *Sharira* (body) is also a reality but not the ultimate reality because even here there is the *Atma tattva* animating the body which is known as *Jivatma* or *Purusha* (human consciousness) or the individual life principle.

The world is an inter-play of the forces of *Prakriti* and *Purusha*

or *Jivatma*. If the existence of *Prakriti* be a reality, the enjoyment of all its lovely objects is also natural and inevitable. But according to Vedic culture the fact that we have to enjoy this world is as much true as the other fact that we have to say 'good-bye' to it some day.

According to Indian thought *Prakriti* is dominated by *Parama Atma* and *Sharira* is subordinate to *Jivatma*. *Jivatma* or *Purusha* has to march towards the achievement of the *Parama Atma* through this body, or it has to reach that which it has not attained as yet. This, in brief, is the gist of the central thought of Indian philosophy.

Regardless of the philosophy which claims our allegiance, be it monism, dualism, pantheism, theism, or atheism, the thought running all along Indian culture is that since every one has to leave this world some day, passionate attachment to the pleasures it provides cannot be the be-all and the end-all of human existence. There is pleasure in the enjoyment of worldly objects, but certainly no lasting satisfaction in an attachment to them.

Who does not seek pleasure? All are after pleasure from the rank atheist to a devoted theist, but the crux of the matter is that pleasure is pleasure only when we enjoy the world and after enjoyment renounce it. The moment we lose ourselves in attachment the pet of pleasure converts itself into a carnivorous monster and quietly slips out of our hands confronting us to devour us into its entrails

The process that brings real happiness in life is that of 'Enjoyment—Non-attachment—Renunciation.' The Upanishad declares: Thus and thus alone—by the method of 'Enjoyment-Renunciation'—canst thou disentangle thyself from the meshes of *Karma*. If the ultimate reality is not of this ephemeral world but of the world beyond, then the only path to be pursued here is to lead an unattached selfless life of action, and to surrender the fruits thereof to the Will Supreme.

This central thought of Vedic philosophy, if properly understood, is not an ideology of despair or escapism. It does not imply complete renunciation or running away into the jungle. Indian culture is realistic, in so far as it holds out its fullest recognition to the existence of this real and visible world, as well as acknowledges its irresistible power of attraction. Vedic culture believes that the various objects of this world have been created for our enjoyment, it does not teach us to run away from them or to close our eyes to them. It only warns us against excessive indulgence in them. The sum and

substance of this culture is to enjoy the world but not to lose oneself in it, to live like a drop of water on the lotus flower which rests on it with all the splendours of a diamond without drenching it.

Some cultures preach the gospel of renunciation whilst others of enjoyment, some of materialism and still others of spiritualism. But it is the harmonious blending of all the conflicting ideologies and thoughts which distinguishes Vedic culture from the others. It is realistic because it views the world as being both a reality as well as an unreality. And is it not a fact that the world is both, real and also unreal? It is real in so far as it is tangible and perceptible; it is unreal because it is not everlasting It was on the basis of this dual nature of the world, embracing both its reality as also its unreality, that Vedic culture had developed a philosophy of its own, styled as 'Enjoyment-Renunciation' in which materialism was wedded to spiritualism. And it is precisely this harmonious blending of apparently conflicting thoughts and ideologies that makes this culture great and unique.

As has already been mentioned earlier every great culture of the world is the outcome of some central thought, and for a culture to survive, its central thought must be potent, vigorous, and continuous. It is the potency coupled with the vigour of this central concept that determines the continuity of a culture. The rock of any culture can resist the surges and billows of time only if this central thought is so potent, so vigorous, so continuous that it is the very life breath of the community through all its ups and downs, and that the community lives and dies for it. It is only then that a culture can be said to hold its own. Into a community which can thus keep its central thought alive are born persons who symbolise this thought, who are its living embodiments; and to ensure this, it is necessary to animate and strengthen the central thought through constant endeavour.

The central idea of Vedic culture has been continuously influencing the life of our community. During all the periods of trials and tribulations, that we have passed through, this central thought has always guided and inspired our nation like a polar star.

Time was when we built our social structure on the foundation of this central thought. Time was when we also initiated the whole world into the light of this central thought of our culture and were hailed as leaders and pioneers in the comity of nations.

But we had also to pass through a darkened era in our history when

we were sent into oblivion and were thrown into the dustbin of nations. During this period of darkness our culture like a fire smouldering under the ashes continued to be enclosed in its own hushed light. It was not destroyed. How could it be destroyed? It had once again to flare up into a flame to remove the darkness of the world and lead aright the humanity that had gone astray.

The Vedic saints have declared: *Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram.* The formula signifies that truth, blissfulness, and beauty are eternal verities of cosmic existence, undestroyed and undestroyable. Keats echoed the same truth when he sang: 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.' True beauty and loveliness can neither fade nor wither into nothingness, they shine with further and further lustre with the dawn of every new day. Keats' reference is not confined to the beauty and loveliness of physical objects or treasures of art. He along with Vedic seers voices forth the eternal truth of the imperishable nature of the basic principles of culture which are embodied in the formula of 'Enjoyment—Non-Attachment—Renunciation' as propounded by the Upanishads and the Gita. This formula has stood the test of time, the ravages of fortune and has enabled our people to shoulder the cross of evil and bitter days, as well as has held its own against the conflicting ideologies that have penetrated into the soil of India.

Today the task we are faced with is to rebuild our nation in accordance with the philosophy contained in our cultural thought and also to carry its message to every nook and corner of the earth. The time is ripe when we and our culture will be put to an acid test. Does the central thought of our culture contain the potency, the vigour, the continuity, the three essentials of dynamism needed to build our society and the world around or does it not? Upon a positive answer to this question hangs the future of this culture!

Matthew Arnold has said, 'culture is a study of perfection' and elucidating it further continues that the best motto in which culture can be described is: 'to make reason and the will of God prevail.' It is the extent to which the central thought as well as the other aspects of our culture can rightly conform to these observations that will now be the theme of this book.

CHAPTER II

VEDIC CULTURE AND THE CONFLICTING IDEOLOGIES

THE hottest and the reddest lava which the volcano of modern ideas is continuously belching forth through its crater is: that and that alone is real which is visible, whilst that which cannot be seen is unreal and thus, it is the visible or the real which is the problem and the sole issue which demands our attention A look at ourselves reveals the body of flesh and blood, and a scrutiny into the universe brings before our vision the five elements, namely, the earth, the water, the fire, the air, and the sky. Nothing is visible beyond. Hence it is held that the only real thing with regard to ourselves is the body, and that the only reality in nature is the physical world of matter.

These facts have come to occupy such a prominent place in the modern scale of values that it is contended that only when a person has got complete control over the things of bodily comfort as well as the forces of nature that he can be said to have solved his life's enigma. Naturally the question arises: how does one obtain these bodily comforts as well as the treasures stored in nature? The answer pouring forth from the crater of modern civilization is that this is possible only through the amassment of wealth which can purchase all that which we need and even that which we do not need. These powerful thoughts have for the past few centuries been forcefully moulding all human endeavours in the various parts of the globe. They have given rise to many isms and theories.

Time was when the only way to amass wealth was to rob those who had it in plenty. Persons resorting to this method were and are called thieves, robbers, and dacoits. But even kings and sovereigns had been availing themselves of the same method without ever being termed as such; Alexander the Great, Mahmood Gazanvi, Napoleon, all of them were motivated by the same ambition to accumulate wealth and set out to attack, plunder, and loot other countries Once a dacoit was produced before a king for the heinous crime of loot. 'My Lord,' said the dacoit, 'I see no difference between yourself and myself except that you commit on a larger scale the deeds I do on a scale much smaller. Big dacoits are called kings.' The dacoit was right.

Then came a time in social evolution when this method of accumulating riches by force gave way to another means for obtaining them which was termed as business. This method was considered to be more refined, cultured and reasonable. In this new era a number of factories sprang up and new ways of generating wealth were discovered

The discovery of many a new territory and kingdom led to the expansion of business. Was not Africa a mere stretch of forests lying neglected as barren land before the English arrived there and settled down only to exploit its resources in terms of men and money? Indian labourers were recruited and sent to Africa by force, and it is through the hire of their services for paltry pennies that the Englishman became a multi-millionaire. It was essentially for business that the British through the East India Company first landed in India. The moment they realised that their continuance would no longer be serviceable to their interests, they decided to quit the country.

Capitalism

The decades of Alexander and Napoleon coupled with periods in history which are noteworthy for the accumulation of wealth through business are known as the eras of Capitalism. The setting out of kings and sovereigns with their armies to subjugate other countries and the landings of the English and other European nations in foreign territories under the banners of business to seek wealth through exploitation are the outcome of the capitalistic mode of thought and behaviour. Both wanted money, money at any cost; the kings by the use of force, and the traders through devious methods of exploitation. They wanted to accumulate and accumulate as much as possible. But does this amassing of wealth create a feeling of lasting satisfaction? If one is in want, one desires to have enough; but if one has got enough, one tends to crave for enough and to spare for hoarding.

Man is man; he covets and compares. It is natural for him to become dissatisfied with his own lot as soon as he sees and realizes that others are comparatively richer, better clothed, better fed, and better housed. When even the haves are not satisfied, how can the have-nots be? How is it possible for the poor cook, who prepares sumptuous dishes for us, to take only rotten meals himself and yet not rebel? How long will the weaver who knits the silken threads

for our shirts remain contented with rags? It is incredible that a labourer who has built a palace for us must shiver in the cold in an adjoining hutment and yet not turn hostile.

Reaction against Capitalism and Economic Inequalities: their Products, Socialism and Communism

In a purely capitalistic set up, the labourer works and sweats, whereas the owner does nothing If the capitalist earns a profit of Rs. 20, he gets rid of the worker by paying him Rs. 2, and keeps and enjoys the balance himself. The plea put up by the owner is that it is he who had invested his moneys and must therefore get a return. But actually Rs. 20 were earned not by mere investment but also by the blood and sweat of the labourer. Even if some moneys were invested could they have yielded such a high return in the absence of labour? Is it, therefore, reasonable to give the worker only a pittance of Rs. 2 against the huge profit of Rs. 20 ? Is it unnatural for the labourer to rebel against the capitalistic order of society sanctioning such a dispensation?

Thus we see that on the one hand stands the capitalist and on the other hand opposing him stands the labourer. The employee is becoming more and more conscious of the gulf separating him from his employer, and this awakening has led to many problems. In the sphere of domestic life, for example, it is now becoming more and more difficult to get as well as to maintain a servant. The situation will deteriorate still further because domestic servants, like the rest of labour, have started demanding higher wages The demands of labour as a whole are increasing. Ordinary peons in good concerns are now getting the same salaries as clerks used to get previously. The demand for the enforcement of the economic concept of the reduction in the inequalities of wealth and income between man and man is gathering momentum.

This problem of the disparity between the rich and the poor has become universal, and Socialism as well as Communism claim to solve it. These isms maintain that this problem of bridging the gulf between the rich and the poor can only be solved through the state regulation that work must be taken from everyone according to his capacity and each should be remunerated according to his needs It is perfectly possible that certain individuals will and must earn more because individual capacities vary, but the fact to be borne in mind here is that there must be equality of opportunity and secon-

dary as well as higher education must be provided for all to eliminate the factor of capacity which perpetuates inequality. The welfare of society depends on the concept that all its members have sufficient resources to meet their requirements adequately.

Because of this rationalistic mass approach Socialism and Communism are having their sway in the modern world. What is the position in China? What took place in Korea? Why was the Prime Minister of Iran, Razmara, killed? Why was the coup staged in Pakistan? What happened in Telangana in India? What else are these if not reactions against Capitalism? Both Socialism and Communism are constantly engaged in a duel against Capitalism, and neither of them is prepared to leave the wrestling ground. The only difference between Communism and Socialism is that while the former proposes to bring about the desired changes through revolutionary methods, the latter opts for going slow as well as for adopting peaceful means to achieve its ends.

But we need not go into the origin, development, and other subtleties of Socialism and Communism. It is sufficient here to note that both of them aim at bridging the gulf between the rich and the poor, both are opposed to Capitalism and aim at a more equitable distribution of wealth

Time was when Socialism and Communism were unheard of in practical life, and these terms were only to be read in books on Economics Capitalism, which was at its zenith at that time, has now been shattered to pieces. Even the capitalist countries have started pointing the footsteps of their policies in the direction of Socialism. This preference of Socialism to Capitalism may be attributed to the terrors created by the latter. And it is precisely to avoid both the harshness of Communism as well as the exploitative ills of Capitalism that Socialism is being ushered in all over the world. Socialism is being adopted voluntarily lest Communism with all its naked violence may show its teeth. It has become an established fact as well as a rule and law of commonsense that no political stability can be guaranteed so long as economic stability and prosperity are not assured. This accounts for Socialism and in cases even for Communism gaining an upper hand against Capitalism in social and political reconstruction.

And this is precisely what is happening in India today; the wind of Socialism is blowing all over the country. Let some socialists allege, if they choose to do so, that India is being governed by

capitalists, but what confronts us is something entirely different. Old values are giving place to new ones. Rajas and Maharajas have been forced to shed off their former glitters. Though they reigned over different parts of the country for several centuries, they were deprived of their political powers overnight with a single stroke. The Zamindari system has also come to an end. Transport enterprises are being brought within the purview of the public sector in a large number of states. Co-operative societies are springing up everywhere. The profits so far earned and enjoyed by the business community are now being monopolized by the government. The underlying aim or objective is to discourage the concentration of wealth in a few hands who make use of it for their personal pleasure and to ensure that its surges lash against every home. So we are laying the foundations of a welfare state which may re-invest all the profits of the public sector in the ameliorative activities of the community.

Capitalism in the modern age has become as much a theoretical concept as Socialism and Communism once were. Even the capitalists themselves feel diffident in lending their support to it in its original form and hence they too prefer to use the terminology of Socialism. This struggle of ideologies which is constantly being staged before us will definitely result in the total extinction of Capitalism and removal of man-created barriers between the rich and the poor. But none can tell whether this change will be brought about by power struggle, by violence and hatred, through Communism or through Socialism, or by the use of some totally different means.

It is difficult to predict which ism will usher in this era of perfect equality, but the present trend clearly indicates that economic inequality cannot survive any longer. And, what is the position about social inequality?

Social Inequality

The annals of history indicate that white races have in the past entertained the wrong notion of superiority over the coloured races and felt that there was something lacking in the latter. This feeling of racial superiority was one of the reasons for many of the Asian countries having been deprived of their independence for centuries.

But, if one were to take the present overall picture into account, it could be said that racial inequalities are gradually disappearing. It is no doubt true that the inhabitants of South Africa do not still

enjoy the same rights as the white men there do, but it is impossible to justify this code of conduct in the modern age. Of course, at one point of time this sort of unequal social treatment was considered to be natural as well as very much in vogue.

Let us consider the case of our own country. Only a few years ago the fortress of untouchability was considered impregnable and even to touch men and women of a certain caste or community was deemed to be a sin. But how long could such a sorry state of affairs survive? Untouchability was made an offence after independence under the constitution. It is only the last flickers of untouchability which are now awaiting to be extinguished.

And what is the position about women? Even in Europe, it was once held that women had no soul, and that the soul was an exclusive gift of God bestowed upon man. Today in all the European countries women enjoy equal rights with men, and a similar emancipation of women has also taken place in India. Are not these social changes signs of the coming times when there will be no man-made barriers between man and man and complete social equality will prevail?

It is clearly writ large on the wall that the time has come when there will not be even one in this wide world who could be said to have no food to fill his belly, no shelter to lay his head, no means to educate his children. The economic inequalities must vanish as surely as the social inequalities have disappeared and the balance of which are surely on the wane today. The main problem of man in the present set up is more economic than social because social inequalities are invariably the outcome of economic inequalities.

Economic Problem is Man's First but Not the Last Problem

It is self-evident that the coming era will not be an era of Capitalism, rather it will be one of Socialism or of Communism or any other ism which may emerge more powerful than the others. But the question of all questions is: will this put an end to the conflicts now going on among the different isms and ideologies? The answer is emphatically in the negative

In fact, there is no difference between the problems dealt with in Capitalism, Socialism, and Communism, because they all have their origin in materialism. They may appear on the surface to hold enmity against one another, but in reality they present the same outlook, in so far as all of them keep the monetary wick flickering before them. They maintain that a man's economic problem is his only pro-

blem and that it is towards the solution of this issue that a man should divert all his energies.

As against this conception, Vedic culture opines that even after a man's economic problem is solved, his basic yearning still remains a quest. What is this basic quest or problem?

The basic problem of man is that his needs do not end at the physical level, he cannot get peace merely by satisfying his hunger or quenching his thirst. He also craves, hungers, and thirsts for the higher things of life.

This visible human form is only an expansion of the spiritual principle lurking behind this body; and whatever is visible in the world form is merely the expansion of the self-same principle operating behind the world of matter. We are not *Sharira* but *Atma;* the real power motivating this universe is not *Prakriti* but *Parama Atma.* Thus Vedic culture presents man's problems in an altogether new and different perspective. Man's real search is not of the body but of *Atma,* not of the world of matter but of the spiritual principle from which all this emanates and has its being.

In the light of the judgment of the Vedic seers, Capitalism, Socialism, and Communism would try to solve the human problem only on an animal level. They would see man only as the body and take no note of his spiritual nature, because according to them, this element does not exist at all.

Spiritual Nature of Man

However, the truth is that in spite of these world-wide attempts to satisfy our bodily and sensual needs, despite wars, murders, and dacoities raging all over the globe for man to fulfil his ambition, regardless of nature looking red in tooth and claw, we are, all of us, at some time or the other, motivated by certain higher impulses. These cannot be said to be material but they go to form the spiritual element in the individual. Is there any amongst us, who would not, for example at some point of time, think of sacrificing his life to save the life of a close relation from some imminent danger or of giving his own blood to save the life of one who is the nearest and the dearest to his heart by brushing aside his own personal considerations? How is this possible if economics and money were the two last words in human affairs and social relations?

Is it not a fact that a man who sacrifices his life for the welfare of others becomes the idol and the hero for thousands of his admirers

through the centuries? Do we not reverence Buddha, Christ, Dayanand, and Gandhi because they renounced the world and sacrificed themselves for the sake of humanity? What does all this mean? Does it not mean that though we are engaged in the accumulation of wealth and enjoyment of worldly objects yet deep within ourselves we still regard its renunciation and self-sacrifice for some higher aim far nobler and worth aspiring to? In this context let us recall the words that Dickens makes Sidney Carton speak when the latter is guillotined of his own accord because he wishes to save the life of Darney, husband of Lucy Manette, his beloved: 'It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it's a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known.'

Is it not an enigma that despite our constantly harping upon the slogans of world peace and universal brotherhood, restlessness, hatred, and violence are rampant everywhere? Why is it that though love, harmony, service, sacrifice, self-surrender are the eternal and fundamental principles of the universe, they are being discarded in the modern world?

It is the rocks of the materialistic theories of Capitalism, Socialism, and Communism which stand in the way and block the advancement of the surging waves of world peace and universal brotherhood But as wave upon wave of these eternal spiritual verities of truth, love, harmony, sacrifice, non-violence break upon the mountainous rocks of these materialistic isms and are forced to turn back leaving room for these isms to hold their momentary sway, they do so only to gather greater strength, vigour, and momentum with which to lash forth in future. These materialistic theories have imprisoned us so firmly within their four walls that we cannot have a glimpse of anything beyond this body and its needs. And similar to the prisoner who yearns for fresh air and a peep into the outside world we also pine to uphold and assimilate in life these principles But like him we find ourselves helpless to do so until and unless we can successfully break open the dungeon bars and come out into the open

Nevertheless we cannot but talk about these principles because they hold us fast and howsoever we may wish we cannot escape from their grip. Why is this so? This is so because these principles alone are true, they alone are real, and cannot but help influencing even an outright materialist or a hard atheist. The reason why materialists admire these principles only by word of mouth and not through

practice, is that though the spiritualism as conceived by the Vedic seers does not renounce materialism, yet materialism does not so readily make a compromise with spiritualism. And living as we are in a materialistic age, all our efforts at spiritualizing materialism are resisted whereas those at materializing spiritualism are encouraged.

It is thus clear that these high ideals of love, sacrifice, and benevolence can exist only if our outlook is spiritual; they cannot be kept alive if we view the world as reflected through the capitalistic, the socialistic, or the communistic mirrors. If Capitalism, Socialism, and Communism can help us only in removing hunger and thirst and if these urges are not the only needs of man, then they can ill provide us with a lasting solution to our problems. They solve only a part of our question, only a fragment of our difficulties. Spiritually speaking, these ideologies could hold a permanent footing in the minds of men only if they could give a local habitation and a name to those far off, glowing, glittering, eternal verities. These are passing through the ordeals of labour, essentially to be born into the world and thereby to bring about its transformation from the world of violence, untruth, stealth, indulgence, and attachment into a world of non-violence, truth, non-possession, self-control, and non-attachment These alone are the eternal, these alone are the universal Thus does the Epistle to the Philippians read: 'Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things '

But no, the prevailing economic theories do not offer a lasting solution to the whole of man 'Thou shalt not live by bread alone' depicts the crux of the problem. There is no denying that hunger and thirst are very important urges for which due consideration is absolutely necessary. But the fact still remains that whereas materialism confines its scope to merely providing man with his physical necessities and comforts, Vedic spiritualism goes a step further and embraces man and his needs as a whole

Outlook of Vedic Culture

According to Vedic culture, the body exists but it is the beginning and not the end of human existence; the satisfaction of our bodily needs is and no doubt should be our goal but not our final goal in life. Vedic culture does not teach us to ignore the body or to shut our eyes to the economic aspect of life. The body is real, it is in-

fact so real that it has even hidden within itself its spiritual principle. How, then, can we neglect the body? How is it possible that the saints and sages who prayed for the span of a hundred years of life could afford to neglect or hate or abhor the body?

Vedic culture pays its tribute to all those ideologies which aim at solving the problem of hunger and thirst, and its preference must naturally go to the one which deals with this problem the most efficiently. It only emphasizes that after having fulfilled their mission of removing hunger and thirst these ideologies must recede into the background, and that they should not keep us in their shackles after they have outlived their utility. In other words, in the panorama of human existence it is the spiritual mountain which should stand out against the skyline as towering over the hill of materialism, and man must remember that after climbing the material mount the spiritual ascent still remains. It is essentially at the point at which materialism ends its task that spiritualism begins its own. Both materialism as well as spiritualism singly by themselves cannot render any useful service to humanity. One-sidedness is not and cannot be the truth of existence. Does not Christ say: 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.'

Vedic culture does not ignore materialism because it regards the body as a means for the realization of its destiny by the soul and *Prakriti* (matter) as an instrument to be used for the fulfilment of its mission in life. The message of Vedic culture enshrined in the teachings of the Rishis of old is that we should start with *Sharira* (the body) and its needs but not end with it; we should begin with *Prakriti* (matter) and its products but not make it our final goal.

CHAPTER III

NISHKAMA KARMA—DISINTERESTED ACTION

WE HAVE already observed that the way of life prescribed by Vedic culture was one of 'Enjoyment-Renunciation ' What does this phrase 'Enjoyment-Renunciation' mean? It means that as the world of beauty and attraction is palpable, real, and actually exists, we should enjoy it; but as all this gradually fades into unreality and slips out of our hands there should come a time in our lives when we should voluntarily renounce it. We should be of the world but not be too much of it, we may live a life of attachment but live it in a detached, dispassionate, and unconcerned manner.

There is a great difference between living with some longings, desires, and cravings always haunting us day and night, thus making our lives restless and miserable, and living free from them in a serene mood and performing our duties for the sake of performing them. This difference has been stressed in Vedic literature in which the Gita occupies the first and foremost place. The Gita is the biggest diamond in the entire mound of Vedic gems, placed as it were on its very top, whose facets will ever shine and continue to attract the hearts of men through the lights, the mists, and the darknesses of all eternity. The Gita which is based on the Upanishads has influenced Indian thought for centuries and moulded the lives of our people

Time was when the teachings of selfless action contained in the Upanishads were misinterpreted and bracketed with inaction and thus the quintessence of spiritualism was narrowed down to the renunciation of the world, the wearing of saffron robes, and sitting idle at home. This development naturally caused concern among the philosophers and thinkers of the day And it was thus that the Gita was written to present the philosophy enunciated in the Upanishads, the Vedanta, and other religious scriptures in its true perspective, and to emphasize that what was required was the renunciation of the desire for the fruits of our actions and not the acts themselves Hence it came about that the Gita replaced the prevailing theory of inaction by a dynamically novel theory of disinterested action or *Nishkama Karma*. The Gita presented to the world the central thought of Indian culture at a time when it had almost fallen into oblivion

The central thought of the Upanishads, of the Vedanta, of all that is pure and noble in Vedic culture, is that in the world of matter *Brahma* or God is the ultimate reality, and that *Atma* is the reality as well as the truth in our bodily existence and life. Although the existence of this world of matter and the body cannot be denied, yet the truth is that behind this body there is the spirit or the soul, and that behind the physical world lurks the Spirit Supreme The body and the physical world are beyond a reasonable doubt real but it is also true that the spirit and the Spirit Supreme are far more real, and it is for the latter that the former exist

The Gita upholds. the body is a reality, so make use of it and enjoy it with the help of the senses, but remember that the ultimate reality is not the body but the spirit, so do not be too much involved with the senses The world of matter is also a reality, so indulge in the pleasures that it offers, but remember that the ultimate reality is not the material world but the Spirit Supreme that animates it, so prepare yourself also to renounce the world. It is a mistake to think that the Upanishads and the Vedanta teach the philosophy of inaction Vedic culture as propounded in the Gita imparts to the world the philosophy of disinterested action, selfless action, in place of inaction or selfish action. The Gita thus dispelled the clouds of misconception which had darkened the outlook and paralysed the social machinery for centuries.

Arjuna's Stand of Inaction or Renunciation

The conception of selfless disinterested action is the rock on which the edifice of Vedic culture stands, and since this ideal nowhere finds better expression than in the Gita, we shall devote this entire chapter to its discussion and also give copious quotations from the text

The Gita begins with Dhritarashtra's address to Sanjaya· 'Sanjaya, assembled on the holy field of Kurukshetra, eager to fight, what did my children and the children of Pandu do?'[1]

In the course of an answer giving an eye-witness account of the battlefield, Sanjaya says: 'O Lord, when the fight was about to start, Arjuna asked Shri Krishna to place his chariot between the two armies confronting each other and keep it there till he observed those

[1] धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सव·।
मामका. पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत सजय।। (गीता, १–१)

with whom he had to fight.[1] Shri Krishna acceded to his request. When Arjuna turned his eyes all around he saw his own kith and kin assembled to fight against him At the sight of these kinsmen thus arrayed and longing for battle his limbs gave way, his frame shook, and his hair stood on end. He confided to Shri Krishna saying':

'The bow, Gandiva, drops from my hand and my skin burns all over. My mind is reeling as it were, and I am not able even to stand. I covet not victory, nor kingdoms, nor pleasures. Govinda, of what use will kingdom, or luxuries, or even life be to me if I gain the whole world and lose my own kith and kin?'[2]

On seeing Arjuna thus giving way to despondency, Shri Krishna said: 'Arjuna, how hast this infatuation overtaken thee at this odd hour? Such a mental state is shunned by noble souls; neither will it bring heaven nor fame to thee

'Yield not to unmanliness, Arjuna; ill does it become thee. Shaking off this paltry faint-heartedness arise, O scorcher of thy enemies.'[3]

Shri Krishna's Stand of Disinterestedness

Who would not have begun to consider the world as false and treacherous, a place full of *Maya,* after seeing close relations who had played and laughed with one another in their infancy as well as aged together now arrayed on the battlefield for power and pelf, each thirsting for the other's blood? Centuries ago this made Arjuna disgusted with earthly existence Even today if one were to view

[1] सेनायोरुभयोर्मध्ये रथं स्थापय मेऽच्युत।
यावदेतान्निरीक्ष्येऽहं योद्धुकामानवस्थितान्।
कैर्मयासह योद्धव्यमस्मिन्रणसमुद्यमे ।। (गीता, १–२४)

[2] सीदन्ति मम गात्राणि मुखं च परिशुष्यति।
वेपथुश्च शरीरे मे रोमहर्षश्च जायते।।
गाण्डीवं स्रंसते हस्तात्त्वक्चैव परिदह्यते।
न च शक्नोम्यवस्थातु भ्रमतीव च मे मन:।।
न कांक्षे विजयं कृष्ण न च राज्यं सुखानि च।
किं नो राज्येन गोविन्द किं भोगैर्जीवितेन वा।। (गीता १–२९, ३०, ३२)

[3] कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम्।
अनार्यजुष्टमस्वर्ग्यमकीर्तिकरमर्जुन।।
क्लैव्यं मा स्म गम: पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते।
क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्वल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परंतप।। (गीता, २–२, ३)

life in this background one would find oneself in a similar frame of mind. It was Shri Krishna's teachings as *contained in the Gita* that infused new life into the despondent Arjuna and brought him back to the battlefield after he had decided to renounce the world. What did Shri Krishna teach? Did he tell Arjuna that this world was a place of enjoyment and therefore he should kill his kith and kin and indulge himself in worldly pleasures? No. What he taught was entirely different The arguments he put forward to convince Arjuna to stick to the battlefield were not materialistic. In fact, they were as much spiritual in nature as were the arguments advanced by Arjuna for not fighting. Shri Krishna also, like Arjuna, spoke of the body as being perishable; he said that death was nothing but a casting aside of the body like the change of worn-out clothes, and that it was only the *Atma* which is eternal and everlasting while the body is perishable and short-lived. But wherein, then, lay the difference between the outlook of Arjuna and Shri Krishna?

The protagonists of stark spiritualism regard the world as unreal, as a sort of a show or a fair, only to be shunned, and hence run away from it. Arjuna had also for the time being fallen in tune with this strain However, Shri Krishna as an exponent of Vedic culture never asks us to run away from the realities of life. According to the teachings of Shri Krishna, this world of matter is unsubstantial and transitory, but there is no suggestion in his gospel for renunciation; it no doubt regards the body as perishable, but it does not talk of idleness or inaction. The doctrine that Shri Krishna taught Arjuna was only the old Vedic idea of treating the world of matter and sense-objects as solid and real, and thus to face rather than to run away from the problems of life, simultaneously stressing that the reality of the world beyond was also undisputed.

Krishna's Stand was an Explanation of the Spiritual Secret

It is indeed a novel thought to regard this world as unsubstantial, and yet to live in it and enjoy it in all its fullness. It is a new ideology revealed to the world by Shri Krishna in his dialogue with Arjuna as set forth in the Gita and it is thus that he calls it a secret

This world, for the materialists is both sovereign and supreme, and therefore, it is but natural and reasonable that they should cling on to this earthly existence It is also fair and reasonable for the spiritualists to try to escape from the world because they always think of it as untrue, transitory, and unsubstantial.

But the novel idea propounded by Shri Krishna in his Gita is to regard this world as false, unsubstantial, and transitory and yet to face its problems, to dive deep into worldly matters, and not to run away from them And, it is this which should be upheld to be the only true and correct approach despite its apparent contradiction.

Shri Krishna realized that persons with less intelligence would find this idea to be both confusing as well as self-contradictory And it was for this reason that he described it as a secret, and regarded it as a conception of immortal *Yoga* which could not be understood without the guidance of a spiritual teacher. He says:

'I taught this immortal *Yoga* to Vivaswan (Sun-god); Vivaswan conveyed it to Manu (his son); and Manu imparted it to his son Ikswaku

'Thus handed down from father to son, Arjuna, this *Yoga* remained known to the Rajarshis (royal sages). With a long lapse of time, however, it has more or less disappeared

'The same ancient *Yoga* has this day been imparted to you by Me, because you are My devotee and friend and also because this is a supreme secret.'[1]

It is clear from this part of the Gita that this novel proposition of regarding the world of matter as being ultimately ephemeral, and yet to live in it and enjoy it in all its fullness, though seemingly contradictory had been attempted to be reconciled by a series of mystic teachers from Vivaswan downwards. It is the reconciliation of this contradiction which has been called a secret, a *Yoga*, a mystic method traditionally revealed by the teacher to his disciple, and handed down from sire to son Shri Krishna says that the secret of reconciling the reality with the unreality, taught by the saints and sages of Vedic culture, had been lost and therefore contradictory ideologies of materialism and spiritualism had sprung up which pulled one against the other This was the secret revealed by Shri Krishna to Arjuna in the course of his teachings enshrined in the

[1] इमं विवस्वते योग प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम्।
विवस्वान् मनवे प्राह मनुरिक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत्॥
एव परपराप्राप्तमिम राजर्षयो विदु·।
स कालेनेह महता योगो नष्टः परतप॥
स एवायं मया तेऽद्य योग. प्रोक्त. पुरातन.।
भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्य ह्येतदुत्तमम्॥ (गीता, ४–१, २, ३)

Gita, and described therein as a path of *Karma Yoga* or *Nishkama Karma.* Shri Krishna, however, made it abundantly clear that he was not evolving some new principle, but was merely revealing an old secret by letting it fly out of the box wherein it had laid hidden for centuries and was thus covered with the dust of misconception. This was the secret message of Vedic culture which the people had been receiving from time to time, sometime through Vivaswan, sometime through Manu, sometime through Ikswaku, and it was the same secret which was delivered, for the last time, by Shri Krishna to Arjuna during the frustrated condition of his mind.

The Path of Yoga and the Path of Sankhya Philosophy Compared

This secret teaching of the Gita can only be clearly understood through a comparative study and knowledge of the path of *Yoga* and the path of Sankhya The Gita contains a clear cut distinction between these two paths, because at the time the Gita was written these two approaches were considered as diametrically opposite to each other. The name given to the path of *Yoga* was the path of action (*Karma Yoga* or *Karma Marga*), whereas the synonym for the path of Sankhya was the path of inaction (*Karma Sanyasa*) or the path of knowledge (*Jnyana Marga* or *Jnyana Yoga*). The Gita states: 'Arjuna, there are only two disciplines in the world—the path of action and the path of knowledge. The path of action is called the path of *Yoga* and the path of knowledge is called the path of Sankhya.'[1]

It was not only during Krishna's period that there existed these two disciplines. Nachiketa also referred to these two paths in Katha Upanishad and even today these two disciplines are at the root of the entire social structure. According to the Gita, the path of *Yoga* is superior to the path of Sankhya, the path of action is superior to the path of knowledge, *Karma Yoga* is superior to *Jnyana Yoga.*

The exponents of the Sankhya philosophy who thought that they had delved deeply into the realms of knowledge taught inaction. They held the view that this world was unsubstantial, that work only generated miseries in life, and hence it should be renounced. Their philosophy was that if we do not work, wherefrom would the miseries come? Arjuna who was being persuaded to fight and win an empire

[1] लोकेऽस्मिन् द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयाऽनघ ।
ज्ञानयोगेन साख्याना कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम् ।। (गीता, ३–३)

to rule over, naturally asked himself: Why, why, when all the things of the world are fleeting? This world is unsubstantial; the one who is our brother today fights with us as our enemy tomorrow. What shall we do with the achievements of this world? It is far better to renounce than to be entangled in sense-objects and to experience the resultant misery and sorrow.

Arjuna had started following the path of Sankhya or the path of inaction On seeing this, Shri Krishna exhorted him not to speak the language of frustration. He said that nothing could be achieved in this world, even the simple everyday dealings would be impossible if we try to escape from action. He stated: 'Surely none can remain inactive even for a moment; every one is helplessly driven to action by nature, he may will it or not '[1]

The Problem

Whatever the world may be, true or false, substantial or hollow, real or illusory, we have nevertheless been thrown into it; and hence it is impossible not to work, or to remain inactive, as advocated by the Sankhya exponents. But if we work, the consequent miseries would be inevitable. How can one get rid of or avoid them? This was the problem of Arjuna, and this was the problem not of Arjuna alone; it is the universal problem that faces each and every one of us

Not the Renunciation of Action but the Renunciation of the Fruits of our Actions is the Solution to the Problem

The solution to this problem, given by Shri Krishna, is the essence of Vedic culture. The Gita poses the questions: why should we give up work or action? Why should we renounce the world as demanded by the Sankhya school of philosophy? Is it because we are afraid that we might get attached to this world, and that this attachment might sweep us off our feet into the quicksands of entanglements in life? The Gita condemns this, and says that this attitude is neither befitting us with regard to this world nor will it win us heaven in the next. Why should we not try to evolve some way which might enable us to work uninterrupted and yet not be bound up into its meshes of entanglement? Since it is an impos-

[1] न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।
कार्यते ह्यवश कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ।। (गीता, ३–५)

sibility for us to live without doing work, why should we not devise a method which would enable us to lead a life of action and yet not be chained by it. We could then kill two birds with one stone. Is this not possible? The Gita holds out a positive answer which may be considered to be the beams of a candle shining forth from the dark and dingy corners of entanglement. The Gita, the repository of Vedic wisdom, enunciates the theory of action but the highlight of this theory is that one should not be affected by the results of one's actions. It advises us to remain in the world because once we are born there is no escape from it, but at the same time not to be lost in the world, to enjoy the world of senses without being led astray by the senses, to spin the yarn of *Karma* on the spinning wheel of life but not to let a knot in it despoil the yarn. This advice of the Gita is called *Karma Yoga* or the *Yoga* of action or *Nishkama Karma*

But can one live in the world and still remain unattached? Is it possible to live a life of action and yet be free from its clutches? Whilst describing this advocated path of life whereby one lives in the world, acts, and yet is free from the fruits of the act, the Gita says: 'Your control can be only over the actions you perform, not over their results Inactive by nature you cannot remain; while acting you cannot order the results to your liking. Perform therefore whatever actions you have to, O Arjuna, with a sense of non-attachment to the results thereof. You should keep yourself in balance in success or failure. This is called the action of one who has settled down in *Yoga* mind.'

In a word, the *Yoga* school of philosophy, accepted by the Gita, decries all inaction propounded by the Sankhya school and urges us to live a life of action, but to act with a feeling of non-attachment to the result. Thus we shade the path of action with the pines of mental balance and equilibrium as well as with the roses of calmness and unperturbedness in the event of rains or sunshine.

But the Sankhya philosophy solves this problem in a different way. The followers of the *Marga* of Sankhya or the path of inaction question: Work? Why should we work? For whom should we work? This world is ephemeral, untrue, and unsubstantial. It is better for us to do no work at all if we want to avoid the miseries attendant on our work. Thus if we want to live happily we must rally under the banner of Sankhya and avoid all work. This philosophy may be compared to Tennyson's view when he states that 'We only toil, who are the first of things, And make perpetual moan' and further

questions 'Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?' Tennyson also concludes that we should not work if we want to avoid the miseries of life

The followers of the path of *Yoga* or action hold out the following reply: even if we admit that this world is ephemeral, untrue, unreal, and unsubstantial, does it not for all practical purposes exist? Can you disprove its factual existence? How, then, can you altogether renounce work and action, or prevent yourself from being caught up in the unending stream of activity? Hence, the true course available to us, in order to avoid the miseries ensuing from work and action, is not to try to escape from the world or to renounce the work or the action itself. But we should renounce the desire, the craving, the longing for the result, the attachment with its consequences, the feeling that 'because I did this, I must get that or I must be rewarded'

Both the paths of Sankhya as well as *Yoga* aim at a common objective, both want to avoid the miseries resulting from action. But whereas the former achieves this end by renouncing the work itself, the latter suggests renunciation only of the desire for its result.

The Gita accepts and upholds the path of *Yoga*, the path of desireless, disinterested action. Shri Krishna points out that this is the art of living, this is the secret handed down from Vivaswan to Manu, the secret now being revealed by him to Arjuna. Krishna accepts the contention of the Sankhya school that action entails us into the miseries resulting therefrom, but questions at the same time the advisability of refraining from the performance of an act He asks: how is it possible to renounce action? If this be an impossibility, why then should one propagate a doctrine which is impracticable? Act we must, it is inherent in our nature. But at the same time it is equally true that we must try to avoid the miseries which result from our actions Shri Krishna states that these miseries result not from the action itself, but from the attachment, from a feeling of frustration, from I-ness and my-ness, which is engrafted into any action performed with the lamp of expectations burning in front of us. When an act cannot be avoided even if we so desire, does it not logically follow that the only alternative available to us is to act and not to think of the result because this is never within our power?

It is probable that a man when asked to give up the desire for the fruit of his action might give up the action itself. Shri Krishna

clearly saw such a possibility. He visualized that people might become lethargic and work with no enthusiasm if they were told to treat success and failure alike. To dispel such a despondency he exhorts: 'Arjuna! as the unwise act with attachment, so should the wise men, seeking maintenance of the world order, act but act without attachment.'[1]

The feeling of unattachment should not result in any slackness or laxity in the tempo of our actions, otherwise what difference would there be between the path of *Yoga* and the path of Sankhya? According to Shri Krishna, a tempoless action is no action, it is inaction. The consciousness that, howsoever one may wish, one cannot avoid the action should only goad a man on to act with double the enthusiasm. Desirelessness and unattachment are solely meant to eliminate the fever and the fret involved in an action.

Selfless Action is Not Impossible

It is often stated that the ideal of working without the desire for the fruit thereof is one of the many things which are easier said than done. Everyone is motivated to act with one aim or another in view. Is there, then, any way whereby we can overlook or ignore the consequences of our actions and develop a detached outlook? According to Shri Krishna, this is possible if we begin to consider this life as a *Yajnya* or a sacrifice. He speaks out thus: 'Man is bound by shackles of *Karma* only when engaged in actions other than the work performed for the sake of *Yajnya* (sacrifice). Therefore, O Arjuna! do you efficiently perform your duty, free from attachment, for the sake of sacrifice alone.'[2] Krishna further states: 'The virtuous, who partake of what is left after their sacrifice, are absolved of all sins. Those sinful ones, who cook for the sake of nourishing their body alone, eat only sin.'

The Gita exhorts us to treat life as a *Yajnya* or a sacrifice, a life free from all attachment and selfishness. Whilst performing a sacrifice a man surrenders himself to the care of the Power Supreme

[1] सक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत।
कुर्याद्विद्वांस्तथासक्तश्चिकीर्षुर्लोकसंग्रहम्॥ (गीता, ३–२५)

[2] यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः।
तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय, नित्यमुक्तः समाचर॥
यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः।
भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात्॥ (गीता, ३–९, १३)

The feeling at self-surrender is: 'I am nothing, Thou art everything; nothing is mine, everything is thine.' This feeling of self-surrender is the essence of *Yajnya* and when it envelops life, life becomes a living *Yajnya*.

All the years from the cradle to the grave should be lived as a *Yajnya*, in a spirit of calm and tranquillity, making *Brahma*, *Brahma*, and only *Brahma* as both the subject and the object of all our doings. The prelude to any piece of work which is undertaken, be it a business venture, or a family duty, or a service to humanity, should be: 'Acts are mine, but Lord, fruits are thine.' Every action should be looked upon as an offering and the Holy *Brahma* as the sacrificial fire into whose unquenchable flames the seething oil of all our actions should be continuously poured. The thought-provoking words of Krishna are: 'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation to the sacred fire, whatever you bestow as a gift, whatever you do by way of penance, offer it all to Me.'[1]

A man who leads such a life of self-surrender has been described in the Gita by the words *Atma-rata* (*Atma* means self, *rata* means satisfied), *Atma-tripta* and *Atma-santushta* (self-satisfied, self-contented and self-possessed). A man leading quite the opposite type of life, that is, a life of licentiousness and indulgence, has been described as *Indriyarata* (*Indriya* means the senses, and *rata* means satisfied) or the one who seeks satisfaction in the enjoyment of the senses.

It is not something unusual or strange to consider life as a sacrifice and thus to live in an unattached way. Every person has had such an experience at some time or the other in life Take the case of a doctor. He treats his patients with all the knowledge and experience at his command, and though many are cured none the less some die. But have you ever seen a doctor cry or weep for any of his unsuccessful cases? He is always unconcerned and unattached. He does his best to save the life of his patient and there his duty ends. He acts and acts with the fullness of spirit but does not let the result overpower him. One would, however, see the same doctor unnerved and undone if his own child were to pass away. Of course, at that time the whole world would change for him. He would be filled

[1] यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ।। (गीता, ९–२७)

with grief, and would neither eat nor drink. He would lose total control over himself. He would now be weeping and wailing at the loss of his child, whereas he never shed a single tear when other children died under his treatment. Therefore, the question that arises is: why cannot he develop the same detached outlook for his own kith and kin which he has towards others?

Let us take another example. The husband of a lady dies. Friends and relatives come to console her and tell her that death must one day overtake us all, and that all this weeping and wailing will not avail in the least, nor will it bring back the dead to life again But, heaven forbid, if any one of these visitors perchance meets the same fate, she would not be able to face up to the tragedy and there would be no consolation for her She would find the loss of her husband intolerable and unendurable. When this very lady had expected a detached outlook in her friend, how is it that the same outlook could not be developed now by her own self?

If a businessman is robbed or loses his all, we try to console him. But when we ourselves are robbed, we cannot be soothed. What does all this mean?

It means, in simple words, that when our outlook is detached, we are serene, self-composed, and cheerful, but when this outlook is clouded with attachment and passions we tend to become restless, anxious, and worried. The message of the Gita and the essence of Vedic culture is that one should live in the world and yet remain untouched by its soil, one should work with a vigour but do so in a spirit of self-surrender as if nothing had been done, one should dip in the water and still keep one's self undrenched and crisp like a lotus leaf, one should be enmeshed in the world of *Maya* but should be able to come out of it as the caterpillar sheds off and worms its way out from its skin.

It is precisely with this idea of creating the inner calm as well as peaceful surroundings for all to live in and work that Krishna tells Arjuna that the greatest is he who 'regards well-wishers, friends, foes, neutrals, mediators, the objects of hatred, relatives, virtuous and the sinful alike'[1] If we try to follow this precept of detached outlook not only to the letter but also in spirit what an immense, spiritual reservoir of perennial spring will be opened up for humanity

[1] सुहृन्मित्रार्युदासीनमध्यस्थद्वेष्यबन्धुषु ।
साधुष्वपि च पापेषु समबुद्धिर्विशिष्यते ।। (गीता, ६–९)

to quench its thirst for equality of treatment. Will it not lead to the establishment of a better moral order and will it not make world outlook analogous to that of Shri Krishna when he said, 'I am equally present in all beings; there is none hateful or dear to Me.'[1] And think of the immense peace of mind the individual will capture when 'he is alike to friend and foe, and likewise to honour and ignominy, is alike to heat and cold, pleasure and pain and is free from attachment.'[2] This is the bliss promised by Krishna who loved Arjuna (all mankind) dearly, if only Arjuna would carry out the very core of his teachings—Oh, son of Kunti, be thou equal unto all.

This outlook is one of treating life as a great *Yajnya* or a sacrifice. It is not attained by a life of selfishness, indulgence, and pining for the fruits of one's actions. Shri Krishna whilst stressing on Arjuna to sacrifice all his actions to Him said: 'Therefore always efficiently do your duty without attachment, doing work without attachment man attains the Supreme,'[3] and further continues, 'Therefore, dedicating all actions to Me with your mind fixed on Me, the Self of all, freed from hope and feeling of attachment, cured of mental fever fight.'[4]

Any work done with desire for its fruits is indeed a mental fever. When the result of some action does not turn out to be what we had desired, or worse still, when it turns out to be quite contrary to all expectations, we become restless, sad, and worried. The only way out is to work without desire. This is the secret teaching that Shri Krishna imparted to the bewildered Arjuna at the very moment he was turning his back to the world.

Why Should We Not Hope for the Result?

Why should we not hope for the results of our actions? Is it because we are afraid that if it does not turn out to be favourable we will be disappointed? And hence is this theory advocated merely to enable us to escape or to overcome this disappointment? There

[1] समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रिय.। (गीता, ९–२९)

[2] सम. शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदु.खेपु समः सगविवर्जितः ।। (गीता, १२–१८)

[3] तस्मादसक्त. सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर।
असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुष.।। (गीता, ३–१९)

[4] मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि सन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा ।
निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः।। (गीता, ३–३०)

must be some philosophical ground, besides the practical considerations, for the ideal of the renunciation of the desire for the results of our actions What is this philosophical ground?

Renunciation of desire does not mean that our actions will bear no fruit. Result must ensue from every act, though it may sometimes be favourable and at other times unfavourable. That is all However, our happiness depends on the favourable and unhappiness on the unfavourable result of our action. But can we not realize that whereas we can exercise control over our actions, the results are obviously beyond the circumference of the exercise of our powers? Here we cannot but recall Matthew Arnold's lines, 'success sways with the breath of Heaven. And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure Thy victory, yet thou surely canst not know.' Matthew Arnold further compares ourselves to swimmers in the sea, poised on the top of a huge wave of fate, which he says, hangs uncertain which side to fall And whether it will heave us up to land or whether it will roll us out to sea, we know not and no search can make us know, it is only the event which will teach us in its hour. Why then should we fret and fume over something which is beyond our control?

How vast is this universe! A number of causes are responsible for a resultant effect We can only know a few causes, we cannot and do not know all because our vision is limited. There is, however, some Supreme Power, operating in the universe, which keeps all these causes and effects in view and strikes a balance amongst them all. This power may be described as the Synthetic Power. It is this power alone that knows the reasons for, as well as the extent to which, something that may be good for us may be bad for others and vice versa, and hence constantly operates to adjust the good and the bad of each one of us in the context of the larger interests of humanity.

When we do not know as to whether the fulfilment of our particular desire will be good or bad in the context of the divine purpose, we are left only with the sole alternative to act with the best of our intentions and dedicate the results to the Will Supreme. We should try to learn to see things in the larger context and not think from the narrow personal angle It was to express this truth that Shri Krishna revealed to Arjuna what is known as the Divine Form.

Revelation of the Divine Form

The Gita states that Shri Krishna assumed a Divine Form to enable

Arjuna to behold Bhishma, Drona, and Karna with the principal warriors on their sides rushing headlong into His fearful mouth which was set with terrible teeth, and getting caught between them (teeth) with their heads crushed. All this had a symbolic meaning. The revelation of the Divine Form by Shri Krishna aimed at showing, in operation, the Synthetic Power which works in the world to reconcile all the contradictions that perturb the doubting mind. The manifestation of Shri Krishna's universal form in which the operation of the law of cause and effect was unfolded to the mental eye of Arjuna set all his vacillations at rest.

Shri Krishna said about this form: 'Arjuna! behold presently in hundreds and thousands My multifarious divine forms, of diverse colours and different shades!'[1]

Who can consider himself alone to be the centre of the universe after knowing that thousands of causes are operating in the determination of an effect without our being aware of them? Arjuna also realized, on seeing the Divine Form, that even the mighty men like Bhishma and Drona were not free from the dispensation of Divine justice; even they were being ground like grist under His teeth. The narrow vision of Arjuna turned into a wide perspective. His apprehensions about the sin of killing his kith and kin disappeared in a moment He now realized that those, whom he was called upon to fight with, had already been slain by their *Karmas* in the scheme of the Divine, and that he was only being made an instrument of that Will, he was only the chisel that would cut the rock, as the Sculptor would direct it. It was thus that Shri Krishna said: 'I am the inflamed *Kala* (time), the destroyer of the worlds My purpose here is to destroy these people. Even without you all those warriors arrayed in the enemy's camp will not survive.'[2]

This was the teaching that turned the cowardice of Arjuna into valour, this was the lesson which made him face the world instead of turning his back to it He began to feel that though he was working, it was as if no work was being done by him The Gita states whilst describing this state of the mind: 'He whose under-

[1] पश्य मे पार्थ रूपाणि शतशोऽथ सहस्रशः।
नानाविधानि दिव्यानि नानावर्णाकृतीनि च।। (गीता, ११–५)

[2] कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृत् प्रवृद्धो लोकान् समाहर्तुमिह प्रवृत्त.।
ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः।।
(गीता, ११–३२)

takings are all free from desire and thoughts of the world, and whose actions are burnt up by the fire of wisdom, him even the wise call a sage.'[1] Thus did Mahatma Gandhi say: 'Thoughts accrue automatically to him who duly performs his duties. In fact, the right to perform one's duties is the only right that is worth living for and dying for. It covers all legitimate rights.'

Shri Krishna was not a mere charioteer, he was a spiritual guide. We all face problems similar to those of Arjuna. The very idea of war disturbed and agitated Arjuna. What will be the result of this war? Shall I lose or shall I win? Should I fight with those whom I called my own? These were the questions Arjuna had to solve. He found his answers through the immortal secret of disinterested, desireless action.

Even today the teachings of Shri Krishna, which infused new life into Arjuna, hold good for us though centuries have rolled by. And for all time to come, Shri Krishna seems to be exhorting the Arjunas of all generations to enlarge their vision, to give up all the doubts and hesitations in the performance of their duties and to do everything in a spirit of sacrifice, for *Nishkama Karma* or disinterested action is only another name for sacrifice and self-surrender to the Will Divine. The teachings of the Gita, proclaiming to the world the secret gospel of disinterested action, will survive till the sun and the moon continue to shed their lights on the globe and will never die.

[1] यस्य सर्वे समारम्भाः कामसंकल्पवर्जिताः ।
ज्ञानाग्निदग्धकर्माणं तमाहुः पण्डितं बुधाः ॥ (गीता, ४–१९)

CHAPTER IV

THE LAW OF KARMA

IT HAS always been a widely prevalent belief in India that one is born as a human being only after having passed through 8.4 million births. There is a household parable of a blind man who made frantic efforts to come out of a maze which had 8.4 million outlets by finding his way through its sides. Only one of these sides had an exit, the rest were closed But as ill-luck would have it, when this poor fellow reached the threshold of the outer access, he started scratching himself and hence, instead of coming out of the labyrinth, passed over the outlet which resulted in his once again being caught up in the maze. The various lives in the form of birds and animals constitute the closed doors through which the soul cannot liberate itself, however much it may endeavour to do so. The human life is the open door through which the soul can triumphantly come out, shattering all its fetters; but its attention tends to be diverted because of the surrounding itches of lust, greed, attachment, and other vices And the result of this is that the soul gets involved in the same cycle of births and deaths which make a demand on it for further labour to salvation.

Those who had brought this allegory to the door of each and every household in Indian society had not actually counted the 8.4 million births, but merely employed this parable to lay stress on the significance of human life. They did not look at human existence through the binoculars of fun and frolic, rather they peeped at it through the tiny keyhole of a gateway opening towards piety and work. They thought that human life was a rare opportunity which must be availed of in the best possible manner Hence every effort was made to ensure that such an opportunity was not missed because a negligence of this kind was regarded as the greatest of follies.

Karma and the Law of Causation

What is the cause or the reason for one to be caught in this labyrinth or cycle of births and deaths? Can one get out of it and be liberated, or is one doomed till all eternity to rotate between them? Propounders of Vedic culture thought that *Karma* was the cause of this cyclic wheel, but they also believed that one could as

well cut short this knot of *Karma* by *Karma* itself and get libera
Thus the first question calling for our attention is: what is
Karma and what is its nature?

The fundamental law of the phenomenal world is the la
causation. There is not a single cause that has no effect n
there a single effect without a cause. The cause that has no e
is not a cause and likewise the effect that has no cause is not an e
This very law of causal relationship of the material world w
operating in the spiritual world is known as the law of *Ka*
In other words, the spiritual operation of this physical law of ca
relationship is verily the law of *Karma*.

This physical law of causation is governed by two facto
forces: firstly, its inevitability, and secondly, the cyclic na
of the law. Let us examine what is meant by these two fac

Inevitability in the Law of Causation

The law of cause and effect is a fixed and inevitable law o
physical world. If there is a cause, there must be a correspon
effect The very existence of a potential cause anticipates a hap
ing in the form of any manifestation according to this natural
If a two month old naked child is exposed to the chilly win
must catch a cold. Nature is no respector of persons young or
it will not take any note of the fact that the baby has been exp
to the wintry weather on account of the negligence of its par
nor will it have any consideration for the innocence, tender
and fragile loveliness of the child; rather it must work its law bli
and ruthlessly. There is no concession or relaxation on the
of Mother Nature; she never pardons anybody who defies her l
Strike against a rock and you must be wounded, catch hold o
red hot flint and you must get yourself burnt, throw a dry piec
cloth into the water and it must get wet This cruel, indifferent,
inevitable law of cause and effect is working eternally and gover
the whole of the universe. It is the working of this law that m
the sun rise in the east, commands the moon to shed its cool
soothing light equally on all parts of the globe, and abiding by
law the earth moves round the sun on its axis Inevitability is the
soul of this law; cause and effect are the two inseparable twin

Cyclic Nature of the Law of Causation

Besides inevitability, the law of causation is also governed

its cyclic nature. A cause inevitably produces an effect; that effect, in its turn, becomes a cause producing another effect; and in this manner each cause is an effect of some previous cause but acts as a fresh cause for some future effect Thus does the continuity of cause and effect become the eternal fuel for pushing forward the engine of creation The seed gives birth to the tree and the tree again produces seeds; these seeds in turn will bring into being other trees; and thus the cyclic chain wheels on perpetually.

Inevitability and Cyclic Nature of Karma

Since the law of *Karma* is a spiritual counterpart of the physical law of cause and effect, it is also governed by the same two factors, namely, inevitability and cyclic rotation. The inevitability is that the effect of each *Karma* has to be faced, and its cyclic nature lies in the fact that the effect of each *Karma* becomes, in its turn, a new *Karma* which acts as a fresh cause for further results to ensue.

In what manner do the inevitability and cyclic nature of *Karma* operate or work themselves out? Every action must have a result; this 'must' is an inevitability inherent in *Karma.* It is an absolute impossibility that one could perform an act and yet be exempt from its result. How does the cyclic wheel of *Karma* rotate? The cyclic wheel of *Karma* rotates on impulses which generate actions, and these acts in turn generate further impulses and actions. Suppose someone hits you on the head. This act is in itself either an effect or a cause; either it is the fruit of a previous *Karma,* or a new *Karma* on its own. Hence, it is either an intermediary link in a long cyclic chain of action and reaction, or it is a new *Karma* (action) which will form a new link in this unending chain of action and reaction. If it is the fruit or a result of some previous action, then it is obviously an effect of some previous cause; and if one does not react even after receiving the blow but maintains poise within, this fruit or action would die out or end and would not create a further link in the cyclic chain of cause and effect

But this is rarely the case. Human nature is so made that if one strikes, the other must avenge in some way or the other If you cannot return blow for blow, at least you will indulge in a variety of thoughts for revenge. Your mind will work secretly and have varied oscillations in contemplating a 'tit for tat' The result is that even if this incident was the fruit of some past *Karma* (an effect of some past cause) it no longer remains a mere effect or fruit;

rather it now converts itself into a fresh cause, and pushes the cyclic wheel of action and reaction (cause and effect) along its unending and blind alley. On the other hand, if instead of being a fruit of some past *Karma,* it was a fresh *Karma* (a fresh cause) initiated by the man who hit you, it will set into motion a new cyclic chain of cause and effect unless you stop the cycle by a determined effort of the will

Generally speaking, each *Karma*, whether it be an effect of a previous cause or a fresh cause by itself, starts a *Karmic* cycle; and thus becomes both, the effect of a past cause, as well as a fresh cause on its own which will produce a further effect in its turn. Thus does the cyclic wheel of *Karma* rotate and the soul gets enmeshed, as it were, in a net-work of action and reaction out of which there is apparently no escape. Every attempt to escape creates only another knot; and as many knots as are unknotted an equal number of fresh knots are once again interwoven into the carpet of everyday life. Thus inevitability and cyclic nature are the two factors that govern the operation of the law of *Karma.*

Fate and the Karmic Wheel: a Question

The question, therefore, that arises is: is there any way out of the *Karmic* wheel (the cycle of births and deaths) despite the inherent inevitability and the cyclic nature of the law of *Karma*? If, whatever that is happening today is only the result or the outcome of a past *Karma,* and anything that will take place in the future will also be solely the outcome of the present, then whatever occurs must run through its due course because it cannot be avoided or mitigated. Are we, then, helpless and innocent spectators of this *Karmic* drama? Can we not be active participants in this drama? Can we not bring about any change in the happenings, good or bad? Is it all simply beyond our power? Is the *Karmic* law a mere extension, to the spiritual plane, of the causal law operating in the physical world? If the law of cause and effect in the physical world is the same as the law of *Karma* in the spiritual world, then there must be the same inevitability and cyclic nature in this *Karmic* law as it is there in the causal law. In this case fate, destiny, or star must be accepted as a final word and every fault must lie in our stars and not within ourselves.

In Sanskrit this is called *Prarabdha* or the activated cumulative force of past actions. It means that whatever is happening at

the moment, whether good, bad, or indifferent, is nothing else but the manifestation of the *Karmic* forces that gathered their strength in the past; and secondly, these present actions are imperceptibly giving rise to such causes as are bound to produce predetermined effects. The law of *Karma,* thus understood, creates an impasse, baffling and awful. Viewed from this angle the freedom of self, the freedom that we crave for every moment, remains a mirage never to be attained; and in place of self-dependence and will to power, fate or destiny overshadows our lives.

Karma and Modern Science

Is there any way out of this maze? In what way can the contradiction between an innate urge to freedom implanted into every human soul and this inherent inevitability and rotation of the *Karmic* law be resolved?

The easiest solution to the problem would be to beguile ourselves and not to accept the law of *Karma* at all. The question of the past life and the life to come arises only when we accept as a working hypothesis the fact that *Karma* is an application, a modification, and only the carrying of the causal law to its logical conclusion, i.e., to the realm of the spirit, because it is the spirit that is the ultimate. This is the root cause of all our complications. If we do not accept this theory and rather believe that every occurrence can be attributed to this life only, that it has no connection either with the past or the future existences, that we are born by the sexual conjugation of our parents and thereby inherit their genetic qualities, that as we live in the world we take in all what we are from the social environment, that we are actors only in the present drama and having played our part we exit from the stage to vanish into the air; if we accept all this to be the ultimate truth of life then there is no maze, no riddle, no contradiction to be resolved. Viewed from this angle, life is like a bubble in the ocean of time which forms and bursts only in the present, and does not in any way affect the past or the future of existences. Thus the story of life begins with our earthly existence and also ends there, leaving no vestige for the future

Modern science accepts and upholds this theory. But is this plausible? Can science ignore the law of cause and effect, action and reaction? How can science believe in the sudden manifestation of consciousness in this life and then its sudden disappearance

without a cause, when its fundamental postulate is that nothing can come out of nothing nor can anything be reduced to void? If we do not accept the proposition of pre-birth and re-birth, of transmigration of the soul, the obvious conclusion is that the operation of the law of cause and effect is suspended when dealing with the problems of life, creation, and evolution. How can science, whose very foundation rests on the law of causation deny the theory of *Karma*, which is nothing else but an application of the same law to the realm of the spirit? How is it possible that such a wonderful and glorious thing as life or consciousness should suddenly appear without a past history, and after a dazzling and dashing existence for a few years pass into oblivion without leaving a trace behind or carrying its consequences with it? The postulate that each of us is born only once in this life and then obliterated for ever can be upheld only if the law of cause and effect does not operate in any sphere whatsoever By doing away with the law of cause and effect, this theory attempts to establish that there is nothing like the past life with the past *Karmas*, and that the *Karmas* done in this life if they have borne no fruit are virtually ineffectual because they do not act as a cause for the life to come

Moreover, if we accept this postulate, the idea of the freedom of self which is within everybody's personal experience becomes untenable The laws of heredity affirm that we are born inheriting the traits, dispositions, and characteristics of our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents. We are imprisoned as it were in their *Sanskaras*. Whatever else there is to our being, it is said to be moulded by the environment into which our lot is cast. Wherein lies the scope for freedom if we are absolutely conditioned in this manner by the laws of heredity and environment? One may further ask: if the *Karmas* of the past lives are not the cause of the present life, why then should there be so much of difference and diversity in the lives of various human beings at the very start of life? To what can our sufferings and enjoyments be attributed? Life has not yet started but the outcomes are already visible. Can there ever be any effect without a cause?

The pundits of modern science advance the same hackneyed theory of heredity and environment as an answer to this question The difference between man and man, they say, is due to the differences in genic inheritance from the parents, and also due to their being placed in different environments after birth. Setting the environ-

mental factor aside, if we accept this theory, it would mean that we are not responsible for what we are, rather it is our parents who are the sole authors of our book of earthly existence They did an act, and as its outcome, it is we who have to suffer or enjoy. How else can we account for the fact that the doer of a deed remains unaffected by his act, and the one who has to bear the consequences is the one who has had no part in its performance? Where is the justice, natural or divine, in this vicarious punishment or reward? The question that presents itself is: why were we, obviously for no fault of our own, born arbitrarily of diseased or sickly parents, thereby inheriting what we were never responsible for; or to those who could not even provide us with certain basic amenities of life and a suitable environment? A palpable answer to this query could be that we have neither an independent nor a correlated existence; but are rather here under the care of step-mother chance only to be thrown out in course of time by her harshness into non-existence. Or, could it not be said that we are all bolts, emerging as it were from the blue, solely to be fitted into the machine of life and after having outlived our utility to be removed and cast away? Is this earthly life, then, only as Shakespeare says, 'a walking shadow, a poor player That struts and frets his hour upon the stage And then is heard no more'? Is it only in this immortal dramatist's words, 'a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing'?

But is this approach scientific which negates the causal law in such a marvellous and wonderful phenomenon as human life? Can heredity and environment explain the differences with which we commence this earthly journey and is accident any plausible explanation? Moreover, why do healthy parents, without the least taint of disease, give birth to unhealthy and sometimes even idiotic and insane children, whilst extraordinarily clever and healthy children are born of diseased parents? Besides, how is it that the balance sheet of life opens with heavy liabilities in the case of some and huge assets in the case of others? There should be neither assets nor liabilities at the very beginning of any venture And just as every account closes with some amount, plus or minus, to be carried forward, should not the account book of life close with a similar carry-forward balance? Or, is it all only a mess and disorder, with neither a debit nor a credit, either to be brought forward or to be carried forward? Do we jump into life to transact business only with

a stolen account, and go off the stage winding up all accounts even our own? Is this proposition at all possible for science to believe in or accept so long as it rests its foundation on the solid rock of the law of causation?

Finally, is it not a fact that the whole plan of the universe works in a cycle, sunset followed by sunrise, sunrise followed by sunset; summer followed by winter, winter followed by summer? And can in such a universal scheme of rotation birth and death be the only exceptions, so that death may take place after birth but may not be followed by another birth to account for all the *Karmas* of the previous lives? The world is set to a pattern and a plan and in the words of Shri Aurobindo: 'Nothing was built with random bricks of chance, a blind God is not destiny's architect; a conscious power has drawn the plan of life, there is a meaning in each curve and line.'

Karma and Different Religions

The Jews, the Christians, and the Mohammedans have their own views on *Karma* They do not accept the theory of *Karma* as inevitable and cyclical. They believe that souls have been created by God to go through an earthly existence, but they are not concerned with the question as to whether He created them on account of their *Karmas* or arbitrarily. Nevertheless, they believe that reward or punishment, in the form of heaven or hell, will be meted out to each and every person according to his or her deeds. They uphold the modern scientists to the extent that they believe that life is merely a chance happening, but they part company with the scientists in so far as they do not believe that the drama of life is enacted here and here only leaving no trace or effect for the future. They believe in the existence of an eternal heaven or hell to which the souls are consigned according to their good or evil deeds.

But how can there be an eternal reward or punishment as a result of *Karmas* which are themselves limited and finite? In this limited span of life we perform deeds, some good and some bad. If the good ones surpass the bad ones even by a negligible margin, we win heaven for ever; if however the evil deeds outnumber the good ones even by a fraction, we are doomed to eternal hell. But can such a doctrine conform to the basic law of causation?

The law of *Karma* based upon the theory of cause and effect is the only plausible explanation which can solve the riddle of life,

for otherwise, one is faced with the dilemma of either accepting life as a chance happening, with no past and no future, or a phenomenon of God's creation which commences out of nothing and ends in eternal heaven or eternal hell. The only escape from such an absurdity is to accept the theory of pre-birth and re-birth. It is clear that if the causal law is an inflexible law, the account of *Karmas* also must be an immitigable account, an account carried over from the past into the present and from the present into the future Any other hypothesis can be assumed only by setting aside this causal law.

The basic essence of the *Karmic* law is that whatever we are undergoing in the present is the fruit of our past *Karmas*, and each and every *Karma* we perform in the present will show its result in the future. This is inevitable and unavoidable The greatest irony of human life is that man performs certain acts, but he wants to escape any unpleasant consequences that may emanate therefrom. Hence it is that some go to the temple, others to the mosque or the church, to offer prayers or make confession; still others venture for a dip in the holy waters to wash off the sins they have committed; whilst still another lot embarks upon a pilgrimage to holy places, or offers alms to the poor for obtaining heavenly pardon But are these the ingredients and flavourings for making the *Karmic* stew more appetising? Are these the instruments with which men can fight against the *Karmic* warrior? This kind of escapism is nothing but an ignorance and a weakness of the human mind

Fate or Self-Determination: a Dilemma

But the question that still persists without a plausible solution is: are we so inextricably shackled within the bonds of our past *Karmas* or fate that there is no way in which we can come out of its wheel defying its inevitability? If what is decreed must be, why should we not let it be so? But are the lines of fate indelible? Must this so called destiny formed out of the *Karmic* law of causation always prevail? Is there no scope left for free-will and self-determination in the scheme of life? Can we not do anything different, something entirely new in this life; or must we be crippled, cabined, and confined within the dungeon walls of our past *Karmas*?

The Vedic masters were themselves perplexed by these questions. They had observed the law of cause and effect pervading the whole of the physical world, and hence had attempted to extend it to the

spiritual world under the hall-mark of the law of *Karma*. The acceptance of the law of *Karma* brought with it its corollary, viz., pre-birth and re-birth, which only aggravated the situation and enhanced the scope of the investigation.

Throughout the ocean of Vedic culture, the underlying current was that the soul was the subject and not the object, the enjoyer and not the enjoyed, the actor and not the acted upon, the free agent and not a prisoner in bondage. How could these two contradictory theories be reconciled, the *Karmic* theory which kept the soul bound hand and foot as a prisoner and the theory of the ever free and pure nature of the self? The question, therefore, that came very much into the limelight was: is it *Karma* that shapes our ends, or can we hew them as we wish? In order to answer this question we have, first of all, to understand the working principle of the co-existence between fate and free-will, or the free nature of the self and its association with *Karmic* bondage For this purpose we will have to delve deeper into the very philosophy of *Karma* itself.

Three Categories of Karmas: Static, Dynamic, Acting

There are three categories of *Karmas: Sanchita* (past, static and accumulated), *Prarabdha* (dynamic and the blossoming forth of past actions), and *Kriyamana* (actions which are being performed in the present). All the stored up *Karmas* of so many previous births including those of the present which have not yet borne fruit are known as *Sanchita* or accumulated *Karmas* because they are already in existence, pooled together as it were into a fund and are not in the process of formation. Some of these are in the process of blooming forth. These are called *Prarabdha* which means having begun They are in the process of bearing fruit but not having borne it as yet, they are said to be dynamic or having started to operate. The word *Prarabdha* is derived from the word *Prarambha* which means beginning The difference between the *Sanchita* and the *Prarabdha Karmas* is only with regard to the time of their fruition When some of the *Karmas* of the *Sanchita* category start bearing fruit or have already borne fruit they come into the category of the *Prarabdha Karmas*. Both these types of *Karmas* pertain to the past.

The *Karmas* that we are doing in the present are known as *Kriyamana* or actions in operation, but each *Kriyamana* after being performed will naturally be added to the store of the *Sanchita Karmas* In fact, each *Kriyamana* after its performance automatically changes

into *Sanchita* and awaits to show its result as a *Prarabdha*. Thus *Prarabdha* is the intermediary stage between the *Sanchita* and the *Kriyamana* stages.

Every accumulated *Karma* of the past seeking to express itself, or which is in the process of fruition in the present, automatically converts itself into a *Prarabdha Karma* Suppose a man were to be bitten by a snake whilst he is seated on the lawn. Apparently it seems inexplicable why an innocent man for no fault of his own has been bitten by the venomous creature. But this is essentially the very nature of a *Prarabdha Karma*. Any one of his past actions in the form of *Sanchita Karma* could have now expressed itself through the result of this snake bite, though it had other forms of expression open to it also.

And thus it is that whatever we may enjoy or suffer at the moment can be attributed to nothing else but *Prarabdha,* that is, the expression of good or evil done in the past. It is not called *Prarabdha* until and unless the effect starts manifesting itself; before this point of time it is designated only as *Sanchita* or accumulated.

Is Freedom of Action Possible?

The most important problem demanding attention in the entire law of *Karma* is only that of the *Kriyamana Karma* or the acts that are being performed in the present As far as the past acts are concerned the philosophy is. 'what's done cannot be undone.' This successfully eliminates the questions pertaining to *Sanchita* or *Prarabdha Karmas* from the scope of our current investigations Thus the only issue calling for our present attention is: whether the act that we are doing in the present is wholly a new, independent, and fresh act, i e., a fresh cause that will bring about a fresh effect in the future. Or is every present act always an effect and are we never free to act independently and of our own free-will? It is the solution of this problem that will immediately unravel the dilemma between fate and free-will

Two solutions can clearly be seen as forthcoming for this issue to be perplexing no more The first solution is that the present act is not an independent and fresh act; it is but a link in the long chain of our *Karmas*. Apparently, it may seem to be free and independent, but in reality it is conditioned by our past *Karmas*, and hence it is nothing but the effect of some of the acts done in the past. How could those who had equated the *Karmic* law with the causal law

have thought otherwise? This is the reason for the believers in the *Karmic* law to be generally branded as fatalists; they tend to be convinced that whatever is happening is naught else but the result of past deeds and is therefore inevitable as well as immutable. The second solution of this question is that the present act is absolutely free from any past ties, it is neither a link in the chain of causation nor is it governed by any past *Karma*. We are the sole masters of ourselves, we can do what we will, where we will and how we will. Is not self, lord of the self? We are not fettered by any past *Karma*. This theory is advanced by the advocates of free-will, but it goes against the very nature of the law of cause and effect

Apart from these two broad trends of thought depicting the two extreme views, is there any other solution which may capture the title of the middle path and which may enable us to get out of the inevitability of the *Karmic* wheel as well as not contradict the causal law? Yes, there is such a solution and it is provided by Vedic culture. Let us now examine the arguments of the Vedic seers on this issue.

The Difference between the Causal and the Karmic Law

Despite certain similarities between the physical law of cause and effect and the law of *Karma*, there is also a subtle difference between the two laws The causal law is related only to the elements of the world of matter, whereas the *Karmic* law deals with consciousness which is above and beyond the material elements. The world of matter is not supreme, free, or dominating; it is under the control of some higher power. What is this higher power?

Some say, it is the omnipotent God, whereas others believe it to be a universal law of nature But whatever be that power, a Divine Being or a mere blind eternal law, the fact remains that the physical world is very much governed by this causal law and in no case can it transgress its dictates. But this is not the case with the soul, the spirit, the self, the consciousness which is a different entity from the elemental world of matter. Modern psychology, instead of calling this entity soul or spirit, calls it consciousness, but it makes no difference what name we give to this entity. All that matters for our present purpose is the inherent nature of this consciousness Do we as conscious human beings feel free within ourselves or do we feel fettered by eternal bondage in the *Karmic* cycle? Leaving aside all syllogistic arguments, what is it that we feel or what is our experience?

Is it not a fact that though we are tied down to *Karmic* bondage, we feel within ourselves, in the very core of our consciousness, that we are free or at full liberty to cut asunder the ties that bind us? Is there a single person who does not feel within himself that these bondages are not a part and parcel of his nature? Who does not feel that with a determined effort of the will he can shatter to bits all the towering walls that enclose upon him? When we meet a sick man we ask him: 'why are you sick?' Nobody asks a healthy man as to why he is healthy and sound. Sickness is not in the normal nature of man and so we ask him the reason for his ill-health, but never the reason for his fitness and well-being. And does not the ailing man himself try to get rid of his illness? He does so because health is a part of his normal nature, whereas ailment is something extraneous Similarly, what does the constant effort on the part of consciousness to free itself from all sorrow and suffering and to break off all limitations prove?

It only proves that sorrow, suffering, limitations, bondages are present, no doubt, but like sickness to the body they are alien to the nature of consciousness. Every living being, at all times and in all climes, tries to break the bondage that keeps him in fetters and wishes to be free for ever, free like the lark which soars to newer heights each day. Is not the lark called the scorner of the ground? Even so the consciousness rightly enjoys being looked upon as the scorner or the spurner of the *Karmic* bondage Does not all this indicate that the very nature of consciousness is freedom, and it is none other than this, for which it aspires by grappling with the tentacles of *Karma*? After the water is boiled why does it automatically cool down? For the simple reason that coolness is its essence or attribute. And even after the direst of tragedies that might well madden a man, does he not once again turn to power, pelf, and play as if nothing had happened? But why does he do so? He does so because his very being lies in happiness, calm, and freedom, and not in sorrow, not in distress, and not in bondage We thus see that every little effort undertaken by consciousness does surely go a long way in pushing its chariot along the road to liberation. This road though long, steep, and winding is not yet insurmountable by this chariot of consciousness, because it is drawn by the horses of positive determination.

The infinite eddies of *Karma* themselves, though slowly yet surely, also push consciousness to perfection and bliss which is its native

state. This strong feeling to break all bondage is witnessed not only in men but also in birds and beasts. But this inherent repulsion towards bondage is not noticed in the inanimate objects of the material world These have only been governed by the mechanical and blind law of cause and effect since the dawn of creation, and this law works itself out unflinchingly in their case because it does not in any way contradict their primal nature. Sentient creatures, on the other hand, from the tiniest insect to the highly developed human being, have all been endeavouring to reach their final goal of liberation from the very moment of their involvement in the cycle of births and deaths. They revolt every moment to shake off the yoke of *Karma* from their backs and liberate themselves. This is so because the consciousness though bound with *Karmic* fetters is by nature free Man is in bondage only so long as he is not awake to this inner urge to freedom; the moment he is conscious of the urge he applies himself to the task of untying the Gordian knot of cause and effect

This, then, is the essential difference between the law of *Karma* and the law of causation. No doubt, the *Karmic* law is the same in principle as the causal law, but the difference is that whereas the former works in the realm of consciousness the latter holds its sway in the world of matter. The causal law is the blind, inexorable law of nature operating without any permitted flexibility. But no, the *Karmic* law is a conscious law working in the world of the spirit with accessibility to change and modification under circumstances created by the human will. The very nature of the world of matter is subjection to the law of causation; the essential nature of consciousness is its own freedom and independence from the iron clutches of this *Karmic* law. If consciousness had been a determined element like the products of *Prakriti* or matter, it too would have been completely subject to the unchangeable law of cause and effect controlling all phenomena of the material world. And in that case free-will would have had no place in the determination of our lives.

But Vedic culture does not accept this proposition According to the Vedic conception, consciousness is altogether different from the inert matter, it has a separate independent entity of its own, and is ever free. So long as this consciousness or self keeps itself ignorantly identified with matter it gets involved in the mire of causal processes; but the moment it realizes its true nature and gets itself established in freedom and divine bliss it defies every material bond-

age and is no more subject to the law of cause and effect. This is what Vedic culture designates as the law of *Karma,* a law according to which each individual soul, though bound, is yet free to act and perform a *Karma* which may be an effect of a previous *Karma* or an entirely fresh *Karma* originating from the innate free-will of the soul.

What then is our conclusion? What is the position of *Kriyamana Karmas* or the acts we are performing in the present? Are they governed by the inevitability and cyclic nature of the law of causation? Are they the unavoidable propulsion of the cumulative forces of our past *Karmas* performed in so many previous lives? Or, are they free and fresh acts undertaken by us out of our own free-will in this life? According to Vedic culture both these postulates can be true in their own way.

Karma is but a facet on the spiritual plane of the law of cause and effect, so the acts that we are doing in this life and at this moment may possibly be a link in the long chain of causation. But since consciousness is originally possessed of free-will, the present acts of the self can also be free, independent of the past, and not predetermined. It does not matter whether we regard these *Karmas* as the fruit of past *Karmas* or even as independent and free *Karmas,* because according to Vedic conception this does not violate the law of cause and effect In this conception fate and free-will are reconciled in the *Karmic* law which accepts causation but with the limitation imposed upon it by consciousness. Herein lies our answer to the question: is it *Karma* that will shape our ends or can we hew them as we will? It is the promised hope and message of Vedic culture to every soul that with its own axe of free-will it can hew down the *Karmic* tree, gradually and bit by bit; starting with the leaves and twigs, then attacking the branches, and then the stem, and finally even digging out its very roots from the human soil. Of course, all this must take time and the very spirit of our sweat and toil must be in Longfellow's words, 'each tomorrow Finds us farther than today.' But shall we not once again repeat that all this hewing, cutting, and digging has to be done with the axe of free-will and the spade of our own consciousness?

When we treat the law of *Karma* as exactly a spiritual counterpart of the causal law, it leads us to the desponding conclusion that we are not free to act independently, that free-will does not exist, and that all acts and happenings are but pre-determined. Thus,

fate becomes the ruling power blocking every self-effort and progress of the individual who then sees nothing else but darkness, darkness, and darkness all around. But it is essentially out of this darkness that Vedic philosophy makes the piercing rays of light to shine forth upon the universe by declaring that the soul of man although bound by *Karma* is also by its very nature free to act and so there is no room for despair. It is true that the self works within the bounds of the *Karmic* law which in its turn is governed by the law of causation, yet it is equally true that a strong and potential determination to do independent and fresh acts is inherent in the very nature of the self. The desire for free effort on the part of the self is evident to each and every one of us and requires no proof or argument. If, however, free-will which we experience every moment of our lives is also a product of predestination, then, all this discussion reduces itself to a mere duel of words.

Though Vedic culture gave birth to the law of *Karma* as a spiritual counterpart to the physical law of cause and effect, yet it was not so overwhelmed by the *Karmic* law as to surrender its concept of the freedom of will to it. If the law of *Karma* was the fundamental law in this culture, the concept of the freedom of will duly occupied its pride of place in the balancing scale opposite. The law of *Karma* and freedom of will constituted the two sides of one of the biggest spiritual coins in circulation in the days of the Vedic masters. Even grammarians like Panini, while defining the word *Karta* or the doer, said: 'The doer is one who is free to act.'[1] The keynote of this culture was: we are in bondage but every bondage is for freedom; we are enmeshed in the entanglements of the world but every entanglement is meant to be untangled; we have been caught up in the whirlpool of the *Karmic* law but this fatal plunge is for a pull out; every dependence is for independence; every enslavement is for mastery; though *Karma* is a law of pre-determination still it is a law of self-determination. Let us see how these apparently irreconcilable statements can be reconciled.

The main problem, as already stated, is the one of *Kriyamana Karmas* or the acts that we are performing in the present. The problem that faces us is whether these *Karmas* are the results of previous ones performed in this or the previous lives; or are they

[1] स्वतंत्रः कर्ता। (अष्टाध्यायी, १-४-५४).

the original or the very first in this life, that is, new and independent *Karmas* with no strings attached. The *Kriyamana Karmas* are of two types, the individual and the social The individual acts are the ones which concern our personal lives only These individual acts like the others we perform are conditioned by the laws of inevitability and cyclic rotation Hunger is satisfied by eating, thirst by drinking, this is inevitability; hunger is followed by hunger, thirst by thirst after an interval, this is the cyclic rotation The real problem is not the individual *Karmas*, but the social *Karmas.*

What are these social *Karmas*? Social *Karmas* are those which, even though performed by the individual, have their bearing on others, that is, on society. A person in anger commits murder, on being arrested completely denies the act, fabricates a false tale; or, a person commits theft, dacoity, adultery, etc , these are anti-social acts. They do not concern the individual so much as they concern society in general. The social aspect of the law of *Karma* is whether these anti-social acts like murder, theft, dacoity, adultery, etc., are sequences in the *Karmic* chain of cause and effect or are they independent acts performed in this life only. If they are a link in the chain of cause and effect having their origin in the past, then they must be governed by the principles of inevitability and cyclic rotation and, as such, they are unavoidable.

Thus we are faced with the question: what is virtue, what is vice? Virtue is virtue, and even so vice is vice, when we perform it knowing it to be virtue or vice, that is, when the deed is carried through with our full knowledge and by the operation of our free-will. If an act is performed as a matter of necessity, whether we will it or not, it is neither virtue nor vice, because we as the free agents in its performance do not count

Thus the real problem that confronts us is: are the anti-social acts which we commit, such as, murder, theft, dacoity, elopement, adultery, etc., the inevitable, the unavoidable consequences of past *Karmas* or are they under our control? And, even if they be the consequences, can we put a stop to them by the free exercise of our will or not? To all appearances, if the *Kármic* law of causation is the spiritual counterpart of the physical law, everything that happens must occur and cannot be avoided despite every effort on our part. What a fatalistic and dismal picture!

But Vedic ideology strikes a different chord at this point in its scale of argument Its affirmation is that the *Karmic* law is not a

blind law like the physical law of cause and effect; it is not a law of brick and mortar, rather it is a law of consciousness. Hit a stone against a wall and it will strike it, the wall cannot bend down for the stone to fly over; hit the same stone against a man and watch the scene! Either the stone will hit him or the man will try to escape it and come out unhurt from the ordeal. What does this effort to escape prove? It proves that though the wall has no option, man has an option to be hit or to escape as the will to freedom is one of the constituents of his nature. Inevitability and cyclic rotation of the *Karmic* law may subject a man to their operation but, due to inherent consciousness, he may use his will and rend to pieces the iron bars of the law of *Karma* that keep him imprisoned. Let us delve a little deeper into the mysteries of free-will

Emotional Impulse is the Cause of every Karmic Cycle

How do we get enmeshed into the *Karmic* cycle? The following example will help us to illustrate the manner in which this entanglement can be brought about. Suppose a thief is detected whilst committing theft. The owner flies into a rage and hits him on the face. The thief reacts and strikes back. This results in a series of actions and reactions and a *Karmic* cycle is set into motion. The question is: could the Gordian knot of inevitability and cyclic rotation be cut short at any given point or must this cycle perpetually go on? The answer given by Vedic culture is that the knot could be cut short at the commencement of the action, in the middle of the action, and even at the very end of the action. For we, as human beings, are possessed of consciousness and free-will, and hence cannot be expected to react like the stone wall which responds only mechanically and in a set pattern.

How did the cycle start? The person committed a theft. Thus in the very first instance, if he had not fallen a prey to greed he would not have committed the theft, and the *Karmic* cycle would not have started. In the second stage, if after the theft was committed, neither the owner nor the thief had poured out the vials of their wrath upon each other, the *Karmic* cycle would have been cut short in the middle Finally, even if after having hit each other, had they apologized for their misbehaviour, this cycle would have still come to an end If we hold that this committing of theft and consequent skirmish was an integral part of the inevitability and cyclic nature of the *Karmic* law, that all this chain of action and

reaction was pre-determined and pre-ordained, it is tantamount to saying that man is nothing but the body, similar to brick and stone, without consciousness, without mind, without soul, without *Atma tattva*.

Vedic culture does not treat man as being the body alone. The body is only the tabernacle of the soul which resides in it, and the soul is ever free to act as it will though bound by its own *Karmas* Every bondage of the soul has been created by the soul itself, and it is the soul alone that can undo it. The spirit is by its very nature free, and it is only out of its own free-will that it has forged the shackles which bind it. Do we not experience that whilst we are gripped with greed, we also feel that we can get over it if we will; whilst we are beside ourselves with anger, we can hold the reins in our hands should we wish to do so; whilst thirsting to wreak vengeance against our enemy, we feel that we can also forgive him if we will; and when being carried away with passion in the current of life,' we also feel that we can stem the tide if we so desire? How do the actions and reactions of the *Karmic* cycle proceed? The chain is forged and proceeds ahead due to the causes which are essentially emotional and not physical or mechanical It is greed, anger, revenge, lust, or the emotional impulses that animate the *Karmic* cycle. The greed, the anger, the lust, of millions and trillions of beings, are the propelling forces of the *Karmic* cycles that govern our lives. These emotional impulses are known in Indian philosophy as *Kama* (lust), *Krodha* (anger), *Lobha* (greed), *Moha* (attachment), *Matsara* (jealousy)

The cycle of *Karma* wheels along the track laid out for it by these emotional impulses; it is these emotional impulses that serve as a footstool for *Karma* to stand upon. Thus the question should be re-framed and the emphasis should be not on whether a man could avoid theft, adultery, or murder; but whether it is possible for him to control the impulses of his mind which lead to theft, adultery, and murder. If one can control one's mind, and subjugate the dire impulses that overwhelm the self in one's weaker moments, one can cut across the inevitability and cyclic rotation of the law of *Karma*. This is the only method to prevent the *Karmic* wheel from putting itself into rotation; but as and when it starts turning, the way out is to stand with one's back against the wall, and thereby put a stop to its further progress by the exercise of one's will which is ever free.

Bhoga Yoni and Karma Yoni

Lust, anger, greed, attachment, jealousy, are the fountains out of which the waters of the various vicious acts like elopement, adultery, theft, murder, spring forth and keep soaring to newer heights each day If we succeed in controlling these impulses we can prevent ourselves from smarting under the yoke of *Karma*, but if we continuously fall a prey to them we will be no better than mere spokes in the wheel of *Karma* which will rotate till all eternity. It is not an easy matter to get out of this cycle. The soul is free no doubt, but even though free, it is still in the bondage of its own creation. Is not the fly that is stationed opposite a cobweb free to fly where it wills? But when the spider says: 'will you walk into my parlour?' what does the fly do? Even so the soul which was a free fly has fallen a prey to the *Karmic* spider. The *Karmas* which it was free to perform for its own liberation have resulted in the very chains that bind it. The soul was free to covet, or not to covet; free to lust after carnality, or not to lust; free to be greedy, or not to be greedy; but it chose the latter and raised its own prison walls.

Can it now, therefore, not open the prison gates that it has closed by its very self? The answer given out by Vedic culture is that it can! Is not the darkest hour always before the dawn? Even so, though the *Karmic* prison is a dark dungeon, only a moment of pensivity is required to realize that the rays of light are struggling hard to get in into this area of darkness. This, in turn, will show us the way, by which this task must be shouldered by each and every one of us, by entertaining hopes and aspirations to a life of freedom from the *Karmic* cycle What, therefore, are these hopes and aspirations that Vedic culture has to offer to humanity at large?

Vedic ideology classifies living beings into two groups: animals and men Animals are those beings in whom the law of *Karma* behaves in absolutely the same manner as the mechanical law of cause and effect Here the question of free-will does not arise. Thus, psychologically speaking, these species of beings are governed only by instincts, and never by intelligence Instinct is a mechanical impulse which is irresistible, and hence all acts done under its influence leave no room for free-will to play its part The impulses that catch hold of the animal in their iron grip are the same as those we have mentioned above. lust, anger, greed, attachment, jealousy, etc These enslave it and fling it into the whirlpool

of the mechanical *Karmic* law which operates in exactly the same manner as the inevitable law of cause and effect

The sting of the impulse must travel down into the very core of our being to enable us to learn the lesson of its ultimate futility. This can only be done through our existences in animal form. In the body of the animal, the soul unconsciously gathers experiences of the fact that these emotional impulses of lust, anger, etc., end in one's ruin. As this lesson must be taught in various ways, the soul is ordained to pass through innumerable animal lives. These animal lives are called *Bhoga Yonis* or lives for the gathering of mechanical experiences pertaining to the operation of the *Karmic* law. The wisdom of the designer is revealed by the fact that these experiences are made to filter down unconsciously into the soul through the mechanical device of the animal bodies; and are not left to intelligence because, by this method, the individual would never learn. The one who said: 'I know the right and yet the wrong pursue,' spoke nothing but the truth.

After passing through all these animal lives, in which the law of cause and effect mechanically operates without the intervention of free-will, the soul at last enters the human life in which the causal law is replaced by the *Karmic* law. Human life is called *Karma Yoni* because here the spiritually conscious law of *Karma,* having free-will as its integral nature, replaces for the first time the mechanical blind law of cause and effect that was till now in operation. It is called *Karma Yoni* because in this our own *Karma* or free-will is supreme, and not the inevitability and cyclic rotation of the causal law which is now done away with. It is only after having passed through innumerable *Bhoga Yonis,* that the soul emerges therefrom with an indelible impress on it that the only way to cut across the *Karmic* cycle is to face the challenge of these emotional impulses. To these it has been mechanically subjecting itself through animal lives up to this time, and hence it now enters the *Karma Yoni* or the life of man

The soul is now in possession of the weapon of free-will with which it can shatter to pieces the shackles of inevitability and cyclic rotation and wend its way out of the *Karmic* wheel The fundamental fact is that we, as human beings, have the potentiality of exercising our free-will; but it is absolutely the choice of each one of us whether this weapon is used or not. Those who avail themselves of this opportunity of exercising their free-will can meet the challenge of

Karmic bondage. But those who lose this rare opportunity are sent back, according to the Indian traditions and beliefs, to re-live the lives of *Bhoga Yonis* and learn the lesson once again that a life of passions is naught else but futile.

It is no doubt true that in an animal existence one is hardly aware of the relationship between any action and its result, nor is this always known to one even in a human life, but this does not in any way affect the operation of the law of *Karma*. The soul is on a long, long journey on the road to self-realization, and all the experiences gathered by it in the various lives, whether animal or human, are stored by it, and become an integral part of its subconscious self which lies at the root of all our activities. The subconscious is a sum total of our experiences after they have shed off their individual separateness. Every experience leaves its impression behind and these impressions conjointly account for the subconscious. The passions of lust, anger, greed, etc., which burst into innumerable variegated actions invite correspondingly unfavourable reactions. And these, after having been taken up by the conscious, are pushed down into the subconscious and thus form an integral part of the self. It is this subconscious which rules over the conscious without our being aware of the relationship between the various lustful, angry, or greedy actions and their corresponding results. The mechanism of the subconscious is such that one need not remember the relationship between an individual action and its ensuing result; but every action must leave some impression or experience behind And it is the common fund or pool of all these experiences or impressions that becomes our father, friend, guide, and philosopher along the journey of life.

Briefly and broadly speaking, *Bhoga Yonis* and *Karma Yonis* are animal and human lives respectively, but this is a flexible and not a rigid division Is it not a common experience that there are men who in their behaviours sink to the level of the *Bhoga Yoni*? Thus *Bhoga Yoni* is any life that is governed by the mechanical process of instinct; *Karma Yoni* is a life governed by the conscious process of intelligence and free-will. The law of *Karma* interpreted as the physical and mechanical law of cause and effect, with consciousness submitting blindly to it, is none other than *Bhoga Yoni* or animal life. The same law interpreted as the spiritual law of the awakened soul, with consciousness and free-will making bold to intervene, is *Karma Yoni*. Thus understood, the *Karmic* law is not the law of *Bhoga*

Yoni: it is the law of the *Karma Yoni* or a life in which the soul is free to use its consciousness and will as it desires The *Karmic* law properly interpreted means that though the soul is burdened with the unbearable weight of *Karmas* from the previous lives, yet in human form it can freely make use of its will to pilot its ship of destiny into a peaceful harbour If this privilege or freedom is available to us only in our human birth, is he not a miserable wretch who does not avail himself of this opportunity to the fullest?

Karmic Cycle Can be Discontinued

We shall now try to illustrate by means of some typical examples the workings of a few *Karmic* cycles, how they are set into motion and how they can be set at rest. Our findings here will go a long way to prove the old English proverb: 'Man maketh his stick, wherewith the maker is then beaten.'

An author was busily absorbed in writing, forgetful of everything around him, when his wife called out to him to go for a walk. This disturbance in his work upset him and made him fly into a rage; he lost his temper and yelled out to his wife to shut up. It goes without saying that she had interrupted the flow of his thoughts. Could she not have been sensible enough to let him finish the work in peace and then ask him about the walk? On seeing him in this enraged state she answered back: 'You shut up. Have you no manners? It is time to go out for a walk and you don't let me even remind you of it.' Are not emotions contagious? Does not anger beget anger, fear beget fear, greed beget greed? In this case the husband and wife picked up a quarrel, for a trifle of an event, and for hours did not talk to each other.

The above is an example of a small *Karmic* cycle, the like of which abound in our daily lives But could it not have been cut short? If the husband after the call from his wife had laid down his pen and left with her for a walk, or had asked her to wait a few moments till he was free, the matter would have ended If the wife had not angrily retorted, would not the situation have been different? Thus we see that both of them were fully capable, at each stage, of not allowing the writhing serpent of *Karma* to emerge once again from its tiny hole in the grounds of eternity Every effort should be made on our part to bury this serpent within the fertile soil of our discretion and free-will. But what is it that actually happens in our daily doings? Is not life full of instances, when driven by emotional

impulses, *Karmic* cycles are formed out of the most insignificant occurrings, despite full realization on our part that the evil could be nipped in the bud? Every moment we are free to control the act, but does it not invariably turn out that the act controls us instead.

Only the other day a case of murder was reported in the paper. A young man went to a cobbler to get his shoe mended. After the work was done the cobbler demanded twenty-five paise, but the customer gave only fifteen paise and started walking on. The enraged cobbler caught hold of this client by the throat. He demanded his dues and a struggle ensued. The client in the fury of his passion whipped out a knife and stabbed the cobbler to death. What an insignificant cause, but what a dreadful effect!

One may think aloud on this episode: was this happening, the *Karma* of a previous life being repaid in this life? Was the killer the killed and the killed one the killer of a previous life? How could a terrible thing like murder be the result of such a simple happening as a quarrel over ten paise? A dreadful occurrence must have a dreadful cause.

But another question arises here: if such a dreadful event could not occur due to a simple cause in this life, how could it happen in a previous life? If we still trace it to a further back previous life, we shall have to go backwards and backwards but never arrive at the time when such an incident could take place for the first time. If, however, we manage to search out a life in which such an incident could have taken place for the first time, then why not admit that its very first occurring was in this life only?

Here lies an answer to the fatalists who regard everything as predetermined. If whatever is happening in this life is only the result of the previous life, then the question that arises is: did it happen in the previous life for the first time or was it also transmitted therein from an existence still previous to it? There are only two alternatives which can be considered as tenable answers to this question: either that it happened for the first time in the previous life, the fruits of which we are currently reaping, or that it is being transmitted from life to life, originating from the moment when life first appeared on the globe. The second alternative is palpably absurd as it is not possible for only one *Karma* performed at the origin of life to be the cause of a series of lives. If, however, we accept the other alternative, namely, that it happened for the first time in the previous life, then the question that presents itself is: if it could happen for

the first time in the previous existence, why could it not occur for the first time in this life? If one could be free to act unconditioned by fate in a previous life, one could as well be free and unconditioned in this life also. Vedic culture, therefore, treats the soul as a free agent, making or unmaking its own prison walls.

In fact, the real problem is not the tracing back of this incident in the chronology of lives that we have lived, but to assess the possibility of stopping its further progress in the form of action and reaction by the exercise of our free-will Even if the incident is an inevitable and cyclic link in the chain of *Karma*, can it not be prevented from the formation of its further developments with our present knowledge of its evil consequences? Is the cycle unavoidable, or can the challenge be met? If it is unavoidable, every effort on our part, every endeavour to change our life is futile; *Karma* becomes meaningful only when, by the exercise of our free-will, we can successfully meet the challenges of past *Karmas*.

In the above incident the customer had given fifteen paise. If the cobbler had kept quiet after receiving the amount or the customer had met with the demand of the cobbler the tide of events would have been different. Both of them were adamant in their outlook and hence came to grips. The struggle which ensued, the brandishing of the knife, the fatal blow, all these were merely physical manifestations of anger, greed, and other psychological impulses which are invariably at the root of every evil act. If both, or either of them, had only exercised a little bit of reason, intelligence, or channelled their free-will in the right direction, the *Karmic* cycle would not have been set into motion.

The soul which is bereft of freedom in *Bhoga Yoni* is master of its free-will in *Karma Yoni*, but whether it avails itself of this freedom of will is quite a different question. Although no one will deny that both the cobbler and the customer conducted themselves on the level of *Bhoga Yoni*, on the level of animals whose doings are governed by the mechanical law of causation, yet the question that still arises is: could they not have behaved as creatures on the level of *Karma Yoni*? The whole issue thus resolves itself into a psychological one, as to whether the mind can be freed from the passions of lust, anger, greed, attachment, jealousy, etc , which keep us enslaved in the chains of their force and compulsion Is it possible or not to free the mind from the prison walls of these passions? Are we not

the makers of our destiny, its captains and its crews; or do we have continuously to pay homage unto these passions?

We have come into this world as human beings and not as animals, and every human being intuitively feels that he is free, even though he may be encircled by the chains of bondage. And hence though he be smarting under the yoke of overpowering emotions, he can none the less control the urges and impulses of his mind. If the cobbler had but restrained his anger which was well within his capacity to do, if the customer had not been too miserly with his money which is not expecting too much from him, this cycle would have halted regardless of the fact as to whether it had its origin in a previous life or emanated from this life only. The only way of getting out of the *Karmic* arch is through the doorway of control over the passions and none can deny that it is perfectly possible to direct our footsteps towards this doorway. In this context, we would do well to recall the utterances of Buddha when he said: 'By one's self alone is evil done, it is absolutely self-born, self-begotten, and self-caused, evil cuts and grinds the doer as a diamond cuts and grinds a hard gem'; and 'the true charioteer is he who, like a rolling chariot, controls his uprisen anger.'

Mahatma Gandhi had embarked upon an experiment of a similar nature but on a wider plane. The *Karmic* give and take between England and India had resulted in the Indians revolting against the British which culminated in the mutiny of 1857. The fiend of anger had started its ascent on the *Karmic* mount and seemed to be reaching newer heights each day. It was under these prevailing circumstances that Mahatma Gandhi came forward and gave his new ideology to the country His claim was that there should be a revolt, no doubt, against the existing state of affairs, but that the manner of this revolt should be such that it could not possibly excite any reaction. The basis of a reaction is an emotion or impulse. A lustful or an angry behaviour invites a similar response. It is only an enraged person that transmits his emotion to the opponent Does any one resent a slap in the face if it is given with love?

In 1919, when the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy was enacted in Amritsar and hundreds of innocent men, women, and children were killed by the indiscriminate firing under orders from General Dyer, the country was ablaze with the fire for revenge. If the policy of a stone for a stone had been resorted to, the *Karmic* cycle would have been set into motion, and millions of innocent men in the very prime of

their youth would have marched to the refrain of 'Their's is not to reason why, their's is but to do and die.' But it was essentially at this moment that Mahatma Gandhi stepped in and obtained control over the reins of the destiny of this nation. He proclaimed that he would no doubt revolt against the British rule, but not against the British. On the contrary, he said that he would love the British, and hate only their regime. This was the subtle distinction that was never even dreamt of before. It was by this method of distinguishing the doer from the deed that he could rightly say that whereas he loved the doer, he only hated his deed. We have seen that lust begets lust, anger begets anger, greed begets greed, and thus the cycle rotates and moves forward along its apparently unending path If, however, lust is faced with self-control, anger with poise, greed with surrender, these spokes of the *Karmic* wheel stick in the ground and prevent its future turns. This was the quintessence of Mahatma Gandhi's ideology for insistence on truth or *Satyagraha,* and the passive resistance to untruth or *Asahayoga.*

Insistence for truth was a positive resistance to untruth, a negative approach towards breaking the vicious cycle of the law of *Karma,* because a life of truth unalloyed with untruth left no scope for the cycle to proceed. Violence like other impulses begets violence, but when it is met with non-violence the evil is nipped in the bud and hence no reaction can follow. What is the reason for the continuity of wars and conflicts in the world? Is it not due to the fact that violence, as a psychological impulse, can only invite and excite further violence? The Vedic seers have stated in no uncertain terms that 'one conquers anger by mental poise, evil by goodness, miserliness by liberality, untruth by truth.'[1] Mahatma Gandhi had incorporated this truth into his life and demonstrated its practicability to a wider world.

The Real Problem of any Karmic Cycle: Impulses and Emotions

It is clear, from the above discourse, that the *Karmic* cycle originates from impulses and emotions, and it can be broken by the conquest of these passions. The characteristic feature of any emotion is that it makes one blind for the moment, free-will goes underground,

[1] अक्रोधेन जयेत् क्रोध असाधु साधुना जयेत्।
जयेत्कदर्य दानेन सत्येनालीकवादिनम् ॥
(सुभाषितरत्नभांडागारम्, सकीर्णप्रकरणम्)

one gets swept away as it were by the tide of circumstances, and the mechanical law of cause and effect reigns supreme This way of life has been called *Bhoga Yoni* in Shastric terminology. *Bhoga Yoni* is a life in which the inevitability and cyclic rotation of the *Karmic* law are insurmountable; the propelling forces of action are instincts like lust, anger, greed, attachment, jealousy; freedom of the will is totally absent, and whatever is performed is only through sheer compulsion Even the impulses and instincts are merely the indomitable results of past *Karmas* operating as causes in the present, and of course any victory over them is impossible

In *Karma Yoni* one feels and is dominated by the freedom of the will, intelligence and reason dispel the darkness generated by emotions, and the soul is able to hold its sway. In *Karma Yoni* the choice is entirely up to the individual, whether to follow the impulses and instincts like an animal, or to use reason, intelligence, and free-will; and thus obtain mastery over these instinctive impulses. Two paths are always open for the *Karma Yoni:* one may live like an animal, or, one may look at life as a human being If one chooses the animal like existence, the causal law involving inevitability and cyclic rotation will be the governing factor in life. But if on the other hand, one decides to pass through life as a human being, the *Karmic* law involving free-will inherent in consciousness will dominate in one's drama of life. This will help the individual to get out of the dungeon walls raised by the mechanical law of cause and effect In this context let us recall the words of Swami Vivekananda· 'A strong will is all powerful.'

In life do we not come across men who, even though having been blessed with a *Karma Yoni* existence, conduct themselves as if they were on the level of *Bhoga Yoni*? They surrender themselves every moment to emotions and impulses; to lust, greed, anger, under the pretext that they cannot resist temptations. But does it become a man to say that these impulses are irresistible? Why, then, do we call ourselves Men? Yes, it is no doubt true as Shakespeare very aptly says: 'Men are men; the best sometimes forget· ...As men in rage strike those that wish them best.' But if we all kept the torch of the *Karmic* law and free-will burning in front of us, will it not enable us, despite occasional failings, to shake off the coils of *Karma*? The Vedic Rishis have declared in no uncertain terms that the only way to get out of the *Karmic* bondage is to meet the challenge of lust by self-control, of anger by equipoise, of greed by

contentment, of attachment by self-surrender, of jealousy by love, and of violence by non-violence. Any other way can only lead to further entanglements of the *Karmic* knot. Since this opportunity occurs only in human life, any one who does not avail himself of it heads for disaster. This is not a fear implanted into the hearts of men by Vedic culture, but a warning issued to wayward humanity to bring her around to the path of peace and perfection Is there not an old adage which says that to be forwarned is to be forearmed?

But is it possible in reality to get over these instincts which are inseparable from our very being? Could it not be that we have brought them as inescapable enforcements from our previous lives? The answer to this question held out by Vedic culture is: it is true that in *Bhoga Yoni* instincts are compulsive and they follow the mechanical law of cause and effect; but in *Karma Yoni* the new factor of consciousness intervenes and, instead of this blind physical law, the spiritual law of *Karma* operates which whilst admitting the compulsion of instincts also accepts the freedom of the will. Thus in *Bhoga Yoni* we are not free, but in *Karma Yoni* we are absolute masters of ourselves and hold the reins of destiny in our own hands. Though we can be lustful, we can also control ourselves; we can be angry, but we can also suppress our anger. Does not Shakespeare say: 'The will of man is by his reason sway'd'? Why then can reason not become the marshal to our will? Even Confucius very aptly voices out: 'A commander may be snatched away from his army, but not even the humblest man can be divested of his will.'

Emotions can be viewed, both subjectively as well as objectively; and if we look at any emotion objectively it tends to evaporate for that is its very nature. For example, if whilst caught in a fury, we start analyzing it, how it originated, whether we are justified in being angry, and what will be its consequences, is it not common experience that with such an analysis the passion tends to subside, and finally disappears? Clouds of mental darkness hover around the soul only so long as they are not scattered to the winds by the piercing lights of reason and will. The moment one views any situation with an intelligent perception the emotion or impulse subsides. Lust, anger, greed, and every other emotion is continuously blinding the individual. But is this blindness incurable? The Vedic Rishis saw a great light for the people who dwelt in the darkness of their passions, and made it shine more brightly and clearly

through their message addressed to all mankind. What was this light?

This same light, whose rays were supposed to penetrate into the hearts of each and all, was that the moment one knew one was blind with emotion one ceased to be blind, and that one was under the influence of emotion only so long as this fact did not dawn on him. A person is upset so long as he is not aware that he is upset; the moment he is aware of his trouble he ceases to be uneasy. The withering away of emotions under the scorching light of reason and will is a positive proof that though lust, anger, greed, attachment, jealousy, seem to be inescapable compulsions, yet they are the very shackles which we can shatter with our will if only the soul is awakened It was the awareness of this truth that prompted the Vedic Rishi to declare: 'Arise, awake, wend your way to the souls awakened, for they will open your eyes to the truth that life is not an eternal prison of births and deaths and the *Karmic* law is not an inexorable law of which inevitability and cyclic rotation cannot be broken.'[1]

[1] उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान् निबोधत। (कठ, ३–१४)

CHAPTER V

ATMA TATTVA—THE LIFE PRINCIPLE

WE HAVE already used the term *Atma tattva* in the course of our discussions, and are likely to do so again on many a future occasion. Before proceeding any further, it would therefore be proper for us to clarify as to what is exactly meant by this term *Atma tattva* (life principle), or what is known in common parlance as the spirit or the soul.

Let us imagine ourselves to be standing on the bank of some unknown river. What do we see? An immeasurable flow of water comes gushing along from we know not whence and passes on to we know not whither. Our knowledge must necessarily be confined to that which we see before our eyes. But can we say that the entire water of the river is only that much which falls within the expanse of our sight? No, a million times more of it must be flowing from a source unseen and rushing on towards its destination beyond. And even so, are we standing at a given point in the flowing current of the river of life. The flow of life comes from we know not whence and rushes on to we know not whither.

But merely because we do not know its source as well as its destination, it cannot be disproved that it comes from somewhere and proceeds on to some other place. If this were not so, the only conclusion we could arrive at would be that the point where we are standing in the flow of life is the beginning as well as the end of it. Is it possible that life starts only where we find it and ends where it seems to end? In that case, we can also say that the river has its origin at the point at which we can see its waters rushing along and ends where it fades out of our vision. How very unnatural and unreasonable! A person lives a life of seventy to eighty years Is it only this much that is life? Does life begin only at the moment we take our first breath and does it end when we breathe out the last? Is this the farce for which we are born into this world? Why are we born? Is life the outcome of merely the union of the sperm and the ovum? Does this accidental union alone account for the one growing into an Alexander, Napoleon, Shankaracharya, Dayanand, and Gandhi, and the other into a leper, blind and lame? We pass away after an earthly existence of a span of years. During our lifetime we ac-

complish certain things whilst others remain undone or half done. But nevertheless we are forced to quit the world unawares. Is it all, then, merely a chance or a play with no meaning? These are the problems which have engaged the attention of the great thinking brains of the world from the very moment that man saw the first light of day. Is there any solution to these problems?

Indian philosophers and sages had given serious thought to these problems. Their conclusion was that just as the flow of the river comes from the behind and passes on to the beyond and the flow of it before our eyes is an infinitesimally small part of the whole, even so the current of life comes from the existence behind and passes on to its survival beyond. The span of life visible to us is only a fragment cut out from the roll of the fabric of life. The flow of life makes its appearance with all the force of compulsions that it has gathered previously, adds them to the present, and with all these accumulations passes on to the future. That which meets our eyes is only the sprouting of the seed that was already sown, and the seed which we sow today will sprout into a sapling in the days to come Life is neither a farce, nor a joke, nor a mere union of the sperm and the ovum. It is the manifestation of a plan.

It is doubtlessly true that the union of the sperm and the ovum is necessary for the evolution of life But this fact alone cannot be sufficient ground for the appearance of men like Alexander, Napoleon, Dayanand, and Gandhi, otherwise there would have been an abundance of such men In exactly the same manner as the river flows through mountains, dales, and plains, even so the meandering flow of life passes from birth to birth. And just as the water is the same from mountain to dale and from dale to plain, even so the life stream is the same continuously from birth to birth. The banks and the bed of the river do not constitute the river, it is the water within the banks that is the river Even so the body is not the stream of life, the different earthly lives are only the beds through which the water of life flows, coming from the behind and passing on uninterrupted towards the beyond It is this that is the *Atma tattva,* this is the spirit, this is the soul

The rock of Vedic philosophy is the assumption that it is this *Atma tattva* which is the reality, as patent a reality or, if we may say so, a far greater reality than its physical tenement. Both of them are realities exclusive of and different from each other; the body is not the spirit nor is the spirit the body. What does the bedding in

a residence indicate? Does it show that the bedding makes use of the bedding, or that some sleeper makes use of it? What else is the body if not a kind of bedding? The bedding cannot be for the bedding, nor can the body be for the body. The bedding is for someone who makes use of it, the body is also for the one who makes use of it This one is not the body but is apart from the body and makes use of the body; and this one for whom the body is and who is not for the body is the *Atma tattva* or the spirit or the soul.

Is it not a wonder of wonders that surrounded though we are with death all around we still yearn for immortality? Who has not seen the death of a neighbour, of a friend, or of a nearest and dearest one? But even though living in a world wherein death occurs every moment, we still think that we shall never die. The reason for this consciousness of an eternal existence to beam out of the dismal eyes of dreary death is an enigma that defies solution. The Vedic seers said that this unaccountable urge for immortal life, even in the midst of the debris of death, persists because deep down in the subconscious lies awake the truth that it is the body that dies, not the soul which is *Atma tattva* The subconscious of every one of us is aware that the body is not the spirit nor the spirit the body, that both have an independent and exclusive existence from each other. This consciousness of the separateness of the body from the spirit which, is common to all humanity and, lies awake in the subconscious in the form of a persistent urge for deathlessness and immortality when brought to the conscious self leads one to freedom from all sorrow and suffering The aim and object of Vedic culture was not only to have an intellectual appreciation of this fact, but to have it permeated into the whole conduct of daily life and thereby to envelop the being of all within its fold.

Relationship between Atma Tattva (the Life Principle) and the Body

The fact that the *Atma tattva* is a separate entity from the body does not mean that they have no relationship with each other. On the contrary their relationship is most intimate What is this relationship? The relationship between the body and the soul is the one which is apparent to each and all The big and the small, the rich and the poor, the good and the bad, all feel that the body is the tabernacle for the use and the enjoyment of the one who resides in it The relationship between the soul and the body is the same as that which subsists between the subject and the object, between the

enjoyer and the enjoyed, between the doer or actor and the done or acted upon. This relationship does not need to be proved by any arguments; it is self-evident and well within the common experience of the highest of the high and the lowest of the low. It is the man that can reside in a house and not the house in a man, even so it is the conscious that can make use of the unconscious and not the unconscious of the conscious. It is the spirit that alone can make use of the body and not the body of the spirit. This is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, which in turn is corroborated by everyone's personal experience But though this is the truth, our behaviour tends to be quite different We do not act as though the body were only an instrument of the spirit, but rather conduct ourselves in a way whereby it would be apparent that the body is the spirit itself, or that the body is the subject, the enjoyer, the actor, and the doer.

If it be that the spirit is the reality and the body is only an instrument of the spirit, why then do we feel troubled, unhappy, or unwell when the body is in trouble and rejoice when the body is fit and has its share of physical pleasures? This is the question that spiritualists must be called upon to answer

The answer to this question lies in our daily experience. We construct a house, buy a car, plant a garden and know fully well that we are not for the house or the car, rather the house or the car is for us, that we are not for the garden but the garden is for us But has not experience shown that if the house falls, or the car is stolen, or the garden is uprooted, we feel as if it were ourselves that had fallen, ourselves that were lost, and ourselves that were destroyed? But if only we realise ourselves to be separate entities from the house, the car, or the garden, as it actually is, would we shed tears for all this destruction? Even a fool knows that he and his possessions are not one and the same, but knowing he knows not, and lives in the world as if the subject and the object were identical Similar is the case with the body and the spirit We are as much different and separate from the body as the body is from the house, the car, or the garden But just as, despite knowing this separateness of the body from these material possessions we have none the less identified ourselves with them, even so the spirit, though totally different and separate from the body, has identified itself with or totally merged itself into the body. Vedic culture tries to untie the Gordian knot at this crucial point. The Upanishad says: '*Atma* is the chario-

teer, body is the chariot'[1] The body is not the spirit, it is only an instrument of the spirit; it is the spirit which is the actor and the doer. But it has lost sight of its nature and instead of acting it is allowing itself to be acted upon, instead of being the charioteer it is permitting the body to hold its reins The realization of this central truth marks the beginning of spiritual awakening

Nature of Atma Tattva (the Life Principle)

The Upanishads have rightly declared: 'Without whom the eyes cannot see, for whom the eyes are the instruments, who sees through the eyes—that is *Atma*; without whom the ears cannot hear, for whom the ears are the instruments, who hears through the ears—that is *Atma*; without whom the nose cannot smell, for whom the nose is an instrument, who smells through the nose—that is *Atma*; without whom the tongue cannot taste, for whom the tongue is an instrument, who tastes with the tongue—that is *Atma*; without whom the skin cannot feel the touch, for whom the skin is an instrument, who feels through the skin—that is *Atma*; without whom the mind cannot think, for whom the mind is an instrument, who thinks with the mind—that is *Atma*.'[2] It is the *Atma* that enjoys, acts, sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches, and thinks It is the *Atma* which is the enjoyer, but when it becomes so much engrossed in sensual pleasures that it cannot extricate itself from their clutches it becomes an object of enjoyment; *Atma* is the actor, except when the action so much overpowers it that it forgets itself in the business of the world, and thus falls a prey to action, *Atma* does the seeing, the hearing, the smelling, the tasting, the touching, and the thinking, but when it is so much engrossed with the objects it sees, the sounds it hears, the odours it smells, the sweet or the bitter which it tastes and the hard or the soft which it touches, then it loses sight of its real nature; and by its own self ceases to be what it actually is, and instead of being the master becomes the slave of the sense-objects. The message of Indian culture to the sleeping soul is: 'Arise, awake,

[1] आत्मान रथिन विद्धि शरीर रथमेव तु। (कठ, ३–३)

[2] यो वाचि तिष्ठन् वाचोऽन्तरो य वाड् न वेद यस्य वाक् शरीर
यो वाचमन्तरो यमयत्येप त आत्मान्तर्याम्यमृत ।
यश्चक्षुपि तिष्ठन् चक्षुपोऽन्तरो य चक्षुर्न वेद यस्य चक्षु शरीरं
यश्चक्षुरन्तरो यमयत्येप त आत्मान्तर्याम्यमृतः।
(वृहदारण्यक, तृतीय अध्याय. ७–१७, १८)

thou art a subject but art acting like an object, thou—the enjoyer of the world—art letting the world enjoy thyself, thou art the master of the senses but art submitting thyself to the tyranny of the senses, thou art the charioteer but art being led away by the horses yoked with the chariot, thou art the master but hast fallen to the depths of a slave. Awaken thy *Atma tattva* and know thyself.'

Two Attributes of Atma Tattva—Identicalness and Separateness

Why is the soul asleep or why does it lose its nature when it comes into contact with the objects of the world of matter? This is so because of its two attributes, namely, identicalness and separateness. It completely merges or identifies itself with any object with which it unites or comes into contact, and it is this which is known as identicalness. The body is separate from the one who uses the body but this user of the body, or the soul, identifies itself with the body and its senses.

The principle of identicalness of the soul has been very ably explained by Sankhya philosophy. Whilst discussing the physical evolution of the world, it propounds that *Prakriti* or matter in its primordial form was undefined and undefinable. The first definable manifestation, in the course of evolution, was the appearance of *Mahat* which in its turn gave birth to *Ahankara* or the ego. We shall discuss in the next chapter this process of evolution in detail, but suffice it here to say that according to the Sankhya philosophy the whole creation is the manifestation of *Ahankara* or the ego or I-ness.

The I-ness in our individuality is the product of *Prakriti* or matter. When *Atma* comes into contact with this I-ness or *Ahankara* it identifies itself with it, for identicalness is the attribute of its very nature. The Gita says: 'The world is a play of *Prakriti* acting through its three *Gunas*—unactivity, activity, and inactivity—but the soul due to *Ahankara* forgetting its nature identifies itself with it.'[1] The life principle or *Atma* cannot set out on its pilgrimage to self-realization without coming into contact with matter or *Prakriti* because this is the only way available to it for progress. But if in the course of this contact it identifies itself so much with matter as to lose its individuality, then, all its progress is blocked and what was meant to be a help converts itself into a hindrance.

[1] प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः ।
अहंकारविमूढात्मा कर्ताऽहमिति मन्यते ॥ (गीता, ३–२७)

Do we not experience that the emotions of lust, anger, greed, so much overpower us that we lose our mind? But is this the inherent nature of *Atma* or are these emotions reflected in it from outside? When every fibre and nerve of our body is agitated and out of tune, is it the *Atma tattva* that assumes this form? No, this is not at all the case. It is not the *Atma* which is overpowered with emotion, it is rather the *Ahankara* element in our being which gets excited. But as the attribute of identicalness is the inherent nature of the life principle we feel as though this emotional earthquake has shaken the soul itself.

When we see a person in anger we may react in two different ways: either we may also fly into a fury as a response to the invectives of the abuser, or we may stand aloof, feel our separateness from him and do not allow the contagion of his emotion to infect us. This is our objective behaviour. Subjectively also we may react in a similar manner. When we ourselves are emotionally perturbed, we can firstly identify ourselves with all the inward upheaval which is a natural and on the spur of the moment reaction. Or we can halt, think awhile, bring into operation the consciousness of our separateness from the sense-objects, cut asunder our identicalness with *Ahankara*, and witness the whole scene objectively as a subject would view an object. If we do this, the emotion will immediately subside because it originated and persisted in *Ahankara* which is the product of *Prakriti* (matter) and not in *Atma* which is the life principle.

This attribute of identicalness inherent in *Atma*, which is disadvantageous when *Atma* associates itself with *Prakriti*, becomes beneficial and advantageous to it when *Atma* associates itself with the divine, because it is only through this union that all the divine qualities of the Supreme are reflected in it. The *Yoga* philosophy expressing this idea in a beautiful manner says: '*Atma* is like a mirror. Just as a mirror with a flower placed in front of it reflects the flower, even so when the world of matter *Prakriti* is before *Atma* the reflection is of matter, but when the Spirit Divine is before *Atma*, the reflection is of the Supreme Divine. *Atma* identifies itself with that which is before it, it reflects that and nothing else but that.'[2]

[2] वृत्तिसारूप्यमितरत्र (योगदर्शन, समाधिपाद, ४)—जपाकुसुम स्फटिकयोरिव वुद्धिः पुरुपयो. सन्निधानात् अभेदग्रहे वुद्धिवृत्ती पुरुपे समारोप्य शान्तोऽस्मि दु.खितोऽस्मि मूढोऽस्मीति अध्यवस्यति। यथा मलिने दर्पणतले प्रतिविम्बित मुखं मलिनमारोप्य शोचति आत्मानं मलिनोऽस्मीति (वाचस्पति मिश्र)

But this attribute of identicalness does not mean that *Atma* can only identify and never separate itself from the sense-objects. Identicalness and separateness are both its equally important attributes It is a common experience, to one and all, that if on certain occasions we are swept off in the emotional tides of lust, anger, or greed which totally blind us to all sense of reason and decency because we identify ourselves with these emotions, on several other occasions we can and do stand aloof, think objectively, withdraw ourselves from the scorching flames of lust, anger, and greed, and at once bespeak of ourselves as 'the lustful I,' 'the angry I,' 'the greedy I,' and 'the cool, sublime, and unattached I.' When a person is lost in anger, we advise him to come out of it or to rise above it. What do we mean by this advice? We offer this advice because we are in a position to distinguish between the self and the not-self, between the not-angry self and the angry self, between *Atma* and *Ahankara*. It is at this point of time that we are desiring the life principle or the self to break away from the not-self, to realize its separateness from *Prakriti* and to come to its own, know itself and understand its real self as being separate from its unreal self.

As has already been stated, the *Atma* has both the attributes of identicalness as well as of separateness. When it identifies itself with *Prakriti*, it forgets its real nature, and conducts its doings in a manner illustrative of the false fact that *Prakriti* is all in all. But it also has the potentiality of separateness Its real nature manifests itself when it upholds its separate identity whilst remaining in the world of matter *Atma* is the actor, the doer, the seer; but it can be all this when and only when it acts, does, and sees after upholding firmly that *Prakriti* is only its instrument. It hereby establishes its mastery over the world of matter, instead of letting itself be subjected to the dictates of *Prakriti* and thus losing its inherent spiritual nature and power

The Power Inherent in Atma Tattva

Atma tattva has several inherently latent powers which manifest themselves when it shakes off the foreign intruding encumbrances of *Prakriti* and comes into its own. Are not the physical elements inert, but at the same time is not immeasurable energy stored in them? The fallow earth lying waste can be made to yield abundant crops through proper watering, manuring, and fertilization Water generates electricity, fire is helpful in producing power which is

utilized for the operation of steam engines, ships, and factories. How lifeless do these elements appear on the surface but how pregnant with life can they be when their hidden power is released! In the same way as the five elements, namely, earth, water, fire, air, ether, though looking inert, have energy stored in them, so also the *Atma tattva* though subdued is a fund of inexhaustible and latent power

But this power is not likely to be released through mere factual statements, it has to be awakened This awakening can only come about when *Atma* disidentifies itself from *Prakriti* and the consciousness of its being a separate entity from the world of matter dawns upon it, otherwise *Atma* will remain as inert as the above mentioned five elements This power, released after the awakening of the soul, cannot be compared to the physical power The physical elements produce physical energy but the spiritual principle brings in its awakening a spiritual power of self-realization

What would therefore be the nature of this spiritual power? *Prakriti* produces physical power, but besides this, it is also instrumental in creating in the world heterogeneity, division, selfishness, jealousy, hatred, lust, greed, and war, which are the manifestations of *Ahankara* or the ego or I-ness which is a product of *Prakriti.* But when *Atma tattva* is aroused, it will replace heterogeneity by homogeneity, division by unity, selfishness by selflessness, jealousy and hatred by mutual understanding, lust by love, greed by non-attachment, and war by peace and harmony. These are the spiritual elements and can come, not out of matter but, out of a spiritual principle which, whether we accept it or not. is none the less a reality This is borne out by the fact that though we may proclaim hostilities and even go to war yet all our banners fly towards the cessation of bloodshed and massacre. Warring all along we exclaim: war is to end war The goal of all our activity is unity not division, selflessness not selfishness, love not lust Why is this so? This is due to the soul-force which though lying hidden within us tries to force its way out, and in turn makes man wander in search of these elements whose source lies not without but within

We have already emphasized this fact several times and repeat it here that Vedic culture does not disregard the world of matter. The central rod of the spiral staircase of India's cultural philosophy is that the soul needs the help, or the support, of the stick of *Prakriti* in the course of its ascent to the summit of the hill of self-realization

and self-fulfilment. But the trouble arises when and only when the aid ceases to be an aid, when the instrument ceases to be an instrument, when the support ceases to be a support; and gradually the aid, the instrument, and the support take the place of the one they were only summoned or called upon to help. Let *Prakriti* serve as the servant or the employee to its master or employer or the soul, and the purpose of the coming together of *Prakriti* and *Atma tattva* (matter and soul) will be amply fulfilled in the business of life.

Evolution and Development of Atma Tattva through Five Sheaths

The world as it is would not have come into existence if there had been no initial union between *Atma tattva* and *Prakriti.* All movement, all evolution can be attributed to *Atma tattva* only because matter, by itself, is inert and lifeless. There cannot be any movement from the inside of a substance which is inert by nature. And if an inert object has any motion, which is natural and not imparted to it by an outside agency, it can only continue to move in one direction without diversion or stoppage. But all movements in matter must and do come to an end. What is that which imparts this motion if it be not *Atma tattva*? And exactly in the way that *Prakriti* cannot move without the help of *Atma tattva,* even so *Atma tattva* cannot set foot on the path of evolution and development without the help of *Prakriti*; nor can it ever hope to dispense with it because it is only through its instrumentality that every spiritual unfoldment is possible. Similar to the engine pulling the wagons which makes the train move along the railway track, and as it moves the wagons take on the speed of the engine, even so is the train of *Prakriti* which goes into motion only with the fuel imparted to it by *Atma tattva.*

Let us now see how evolution takes place when *Prakriti* is set into motion by the contact of *Atma tattva.*

Food Sheath (Anna Maya Kosha)

When it is thus, that by a combination of the above mentioned two elements, the process of evolution begins to unroll its carpet, the first designs that become visible therein are the initial manifestations of the still unmanifested *Atma tattva.* These take the appearance of the most primary consciousness in the form of a living physical body which, in Upanishadic terminology, is called the food sheath or *Anna maya kosha.* All bodies which spring out from the

intake of food and thereafter grow and develop are called the food sheaths. Plants, vegetables, trees have only the food sheaths; birds, animals, and men have no doubt the food sheaths in so much as they have the body, but they also have something more than that as will be presently pointed out. The body is called the food sheath because it springs from the elements that constitute the food intake, and after decay and decomposition it once again finds its way to the source of its beginning 'Dust thou art unto dust returnest' can well be spoken of the food sheath.

Vital Breath Sheath (Prana Maya Kosha)

The second stage commences with the vital air entering into the food sheath. The plants, the vegetables, and the trees have only primary life because they do not breathe as do insects, birds, animals, and men. In the latter the evolutionary process of *Atma tattva* goes a step further and manifests itself in the form of vital breath. This, in Upanishadic terminology, is known as the vital breath sheath or *Prana maya kosha.* In the case of insects, birds, animals, and men *Atma tattva* does not stop, in its process of unfoldment or manifestation, at the food sheath as it does in plants and vegetables; it proceeds further till *Prana* or the vital breath makes its appearance. This is the second stage of *Atmic* evolution but comparatively it is also a primary stage. Let it be mentioned, by the way, that the Upanishads regard *Prana* or the vital breath as the sixth element besides the earth, water, fire, air, and ether and lay stress on its control in all their teachings

Mental Sheath (Mano Maya Kosha)

The third process of *Atmic* manifestation is the appearance of the mind on the stage of life. This takes place only in man. Plants do not think, neither do the insects nor the animals. They are motivated by blind instinct. Man alone in all this great expanse of creation thinks freely, and hence tops every product in evolution *Atma tattva* manifests this power to think through the instrumentality of the mental sheath which is termed as *Mano maya kosha* in the Upanishads.

Supramental or Intellectual Sheath (Vijnyana Maya Kosha)

Shri Aurobindo, a great thinker and philosopher of the modern age, has said that *Atma tattva* in its onward march to self-manifes-

tation has reached the third stage of evolution in man. But the next stage which is still higher and which is called by him the supramental stage has yet to come, and just as the body, the vital breath, and the mind have evolved, so also will evolve the supramental The evolution of the body which could assimilate, grow, and decay was a great event in creation; the evolution of the vital breath and the mind was a still greater event; but the greatest of all is still to manifest itself in the form of the supramental. According to Shri Aurobindo, as plant life is distinct from animal life, and animal life is different from human life, so also will the supramental life be varied from human life, inasmuch as the former to be contradistinguished from the latter will have a divine body not subject to old age and death

What will be the fundamental difference between the mental, which has already manifested itself in man, and the supramental which is in the course of manifestation? The difference would be that whereas the mental makes an effort to seek knowledge, but in spite of all its efforts, is inextricably chained to ignorance, or to put it differently, it seeks knowledge but knowledge eludes it, in the supramental all its bondages to ignorance will fall asunder and it will remain ever open to the influx of knowledge. And just as it is impossible for plants not to draw food from the earth, for animals not to breathe, and for men not to think, so also it would be impossible for the one in whom this supramental has developed to have any ignorance whatsoever. Shri Aurobindo said that he had made this discovery through his personal experience which was corroborated by the teachings of the Upanishads. The Taittiriya Upanishad mentions five sheaths of the spirit, namely, food, vital breath, mind, intellect, and bliss. According to Shri Aurobindo, evolution has already taken place upto the food sheath in plants, vital breath sheath in animals, and the mental sheath in men, but the evolution of the supramental or *Vijnyana maya kosha* of the Upanishads has yet to come and that will be the last stage of evolution

Bliss Sheath (Ananda Maya Kosha)

The Vedic seers went a step even further than Shri Aurobindo and spoke of a fifth sheath, or the bliss sheath, called as *Ananda maya kosha* They meant this sheath to be a state of undiluted blissfulness, in which there would not be the slightest possibility of the

existence of even a shadow of pain or misery. Shri Aurobindo said that he could see the dawning of the supramental as clearly as one could see if one looked through a transparent glass It can equally be said of the Vedic seers that they also could see the dawning of the bliss sheath after the development of the supramental or the intellectual sheath; but that all this was possible, not independently, but only through the instrumentality of *Prakriti* Shri Aurobindo had struck upon an original idea or thought when he stated that the supramental had not yet arrived but was in the process of dawning The Vedic seers claimed that *Atma tattva* through the instrumentality of matter manifests itself into the intellectual sheath wherein ignorance becomes an impossibility; and further on, it should manifest itself into the bliss sheath wherein pain and misery would also become extinct According to the Vedic thinkers, all these five sheaths are potentially present in every human being, but the degree of their manifestations differs from individual to individual. All these sheaths, one after the other, are on their way to unfold themselves until the manifestation of the final sheath *Ananda maya kosha* will be achieved.

Relationship of these Sheaths

These sheaths are not to be visualized as being enclosed and hidden one within the other like the subtle and the subtler bodies The sheath or *kosha* here means nothing but the body The food sheath means this physical body which we can see and touch Plant life starts with the food sheath and also ends with it, it evolves no further. The vital breath sheath means that body which, though developed out of food, also has the manifestation in it of another element besides food, namely, the element of vital breath or *Prana* Birds and animals have, no doubt, passed through the process of the food sheath, but as a new element of vital breath has appeared in them, which is absent in plants and vegetables, their body is called the vital breath sheath The mental sheath means that body which, though formed out of food and vital breath, has another new element, namely, the mind which is, as it were, folded into it and which manifests itself in none other than the human being

The mind, as a distinct element, appears in man and is totally absent in animals which only have instinct. Instinct and mind are two different elements because whereas instinct is mechanical, mind is not. The intellectual sheath is that body in which, besides the

food, the vital breath, and the mind sheaths, a further sheath known as *Vijnyana* or intellect makes its appearance. Mind (*Manas*) and intellect (*Buddhi* or *Vijnyana*) are used here in two different senses, because whereas the mind may have doubts, the intellect has none. The intellect sheath of the Upanishads corresponds to the supramental of Shri Aurobindo. And lastly comes the bliss sheath in which, along with the other four sheaths, everlasting blissfulness makes its manifestation

Let it be remembered that the potentiality of each sheath exists in the one preceding it if we begin with the food sheath. Thus it is that breath in food, mind in breath, intellect in mind, and bliss in intellect is the order of all the potential sheaths that exist in man. The food, breath, and mind sheaths have manifested themselves in all human beings; intellect and bliss sheaths have yet to unfold themselves, though they might have already done so to a certain extent in some fortunate individuals. The last stage of evolution will come about when *Atma tattva*, through the instrumentality of *Prakriti*, will successfully create for itself a body in which ignorance and pain will be non-existent. And thus it is that with the help of *Prakriti, Atma tattva* will move on to the very end of its pilgrimage of life, stooping to conquer, and using *Prakriti* only as an instrument in the realization of its destiny.

All this dissertation leads us to the conclusion that the food sheath is for the breath sheath and not breath for food, that breath is for the mind and not mind for the breath, that mind is for the intellect and not intellect for the mind, and that it is the intellect which is for bliss and not the bliss for intellect, because this is the prescribed order of spiritual progress. When we begin to attach greater importance to intellectual life in comparison to the life of bliss, give greater prominence to mental exercise rather than to the life of intellectual understanding, lay greater stress on animality in comparison to the humanity in us, we start on the reverse gear of spiritual progress. Every sheath is only an instrument for progress into the next.

Atma Tattva in Microcosm and Macrocosm

We have used the term *Atma tattva* as a general expression for the spiritual principle working through the individual and through the world of matter. This spiritual principle in the individual, or in microcosm, is called the spirit, soul, or *Atma*; in the world of

matter, or in macrocosm, it is called God or *Parama Atma*. Indian culture regards the body as subservient to *Atma* and the world of matter as subservient to *Parama Atma* *Atma* is constantly manifesting itself through the medium of its various sheaths, that is, body, breath, mind, intellect, and bliss. *Parama Atma* is unfolding itself through its several elements, such as, earth, water, fire, air, and ether. The sheaths are for *Atma*, not *Atma* for the sheaths; the world of matter is for *Parama Atma*, not *Parama Atma* for the world of matter. The soul has to proceed from one station to another in its march through life, neither halting nor giving up the march at any mid-station. The process of spiritual progress is that the soul grasps only to release, and releases solely to grasp that which immediately follows in the sequence of its unfoldment. This is comparable to the way in which we step on to a higher rung of the ladder, but do not remain there lest our upward march to reach the highest might be halted. The essence of Indian culture is that we should use the body, the world, and its objects as only means to an end, and not regard them as ends in themselves.

Atma Tattva with Reference to This and the Other World

Vedic culture has two aspects, one dealing with this and another dealing with the other world. We have so far confined ourselves to this world only in the course of our treatment. Vedic culture had planned out a way of life for its votaries keeping uppermost in view one definite thought: the thought that our body *is not mere matter* but is animated by the spirit, and that this world also is not mere matter but is pervaded by a higher power. The body is the means for the human spirit and the world of matter is the means for the Spirit Divine. This is the basic thought that moulds the outlook of Vedic culture with reference to our work a day life. We shall have a certain outlook on life if we assume that the body exists but the spirit does not, and that the world of matter exists without a God. But our entire outlook will and must change if we uphold that the spirit exists and the body is only its servant, and that God also exists and the world of matter is essentially moving on in His obedience. It was only through developing this spiritual outlook that Vedic philosophy gave birth to its various cultural concepts, such as, selfless action, four stages of life, sacrifice, non-violence, truth, non-possession, self-control, dispossession All these concepts with reference to our practical life in this world are merely corollaries

of the basic assumption of the existence of the soul in the body and the Super Soul in the world of matter

According to the Vedic seers, the soul and the Super Soul in themselves were not mere concepts of the other world They regarded *Atma tattva* as a concept of this world and as real as the body and the world of matter. In the manner that the materialists regard matter as a reality, discuss it, analyse it, and develop not only physical but also metaphysical theories about it, similarly the spiritualists treat the spirit as a reality, discuss it, analyse it, and formulate different metaphysical theories about the nature of spiritual existence and the world beyond, such as, monism, monotheism, dualism, pantheism, theism. But the fact to be borne in mind is that all these tenets, like the supra-material theories of the material philosophers, are hypotheses not of this but of the other world These metaphysical theories have been advocated by Indian philosophy and have also influenced India's cultural life. But the basic thought which runs uninterrupted even across these different metaphysical theories and hypotheses which pertain to the other world is: *Atma tattva* is a reality, a reality of this very world, a reality which cannot be denied; and all individual and social planning must proceed on the assumption of its existence For does not Christ say: 'Where your treasure house is, there your heart is also'

There are different hypotheses regarding the composition of matter Does it consist of atoms, or electrons, or of any other substance? Despite the existence of these different theories, if matter is regarded as the ultimate reality in nature to the negation of the spirit, a particular philosophy of life will evolve. But, on the other hand, the spirit or *Atma tattva* can also looked upon as a reality, a reality in the sense that it is as real as matter itself, and is not a mere myth but has its own cognizable existence. Thus though there might be various theories regarding its nature, such as, monism, dualism, tri-ism, transmigration, metapsychosis, another philosophy and another cult will and must claim our allegiance. Vedic culture claimed that the latter view of life was the only outlook which could hold its sway, because, even pragmatically, in that way alone lay peace, happiness, and contentment for mankind at large.

We have trodden the materialistic path for several centuries. Humanity has found neither peace nor happiness nor contentment by its pursual The more did we move in this direction the less

did we have of these coveted virtues. Has not the time arrived when we should attempt to follow the other path of life or the spiritualistic way? Let us assume, even though it be only for the purposes of observation and experiment, that *Atma tattva* is a reality and then plan out our individual and social life on this hypothesis. Let us live that way for a century and then declare whether this path, shown by the saints and sages of India, can or cannot bestow peace, harmony, contentment, and happiness on the discontented men and women of the world.

Addressing the Christian world, Bernard Shaw aptly observed that the twentieth century man was faced with the challenge of a choice: Barabbas or Jesus? He further continued that he saw 'the Barabbasque social organisation as a failure' and was convinced that 'the Life Force could not be fully beaten by any failure, and would even supersede humanity by evolving a higher species.' Is it not heartening to hearken to such echoes reverberating throughout the length and breadth of the world, emanating from the wise men of the East and the West, from Vedic Rishis to the modern seers of this age, visualizing an era of spiritual awakening after having passed for ages through the darknesses of materialism?

CHAPTER VI

AHANKARA AND ATMA—EGO AND SPIRIT

ACHARYA Kapila, the founder of the Sankhya school of philosophy, is regarded as one of the foremost exponents of ancient Indian culture. The dictum that 'No knowledge can equal the Sankhya philosophy'[1] was considered to be a truism for several generations.

The founder of the Sankhya philosophy[2] described the evolution of the world and its attendant processes thus:

Prakriti (matter) in its original state was undefined. It rested in a state of equipoise. It has three attributes or modes known as *Sattvaguna* (unactivity or equipoise), *Rajoguna* (activity), *Tamoguna* (inactivity or indolence); all of which were inherent in it but unmanifested in its original state of equipoise.

What do we mean by unactivity, activity, and inactivity? Evolution is a state of development, a process, a sort of activity. Positive activity has been termed as *Rajas*. Negativity in activity has been termed as *Tamas* which we have translated as inactivity. In this state there is inertia, no potentiality towards activity. But there is a third state in which the potentiality towards activity is present but is not manifested. This is a state of equipoise, a state in which activity and inactivity are balanced. This state has been termed as *Sattva* which we have translated as unactivity. Unactivity stands midway between activity and inactivity.

Evolutionary process starts with unactivity and equipose when activity has not started but is potentially present. This is *Sattva*. The second-stage comes when activity fully manifests itself. This is *Rajas*. The third stage in evolution comes when activity fully exhausts itself and inactivity ensues. This is *Tamas*. This process goes on in the physical as well as the psychological world.

In the course of evolution when matter started becoming defined or assuming a concrete shape, its first manifestation was quantitative, that is, its equipoise was broken and from undefinedness and in-

[1] नास्ति सांख्यसम ज्ञानम्। (स्फुटोक्ति:)

[2] प्रकृतेर्महान् महतोऽहंकार:। अहंकारात् पञ्चतन्मात्राणि उभयमिन्द्रियम् तन्मात्रेभ्य: स्थूलभूतानि पुरुष इति पञ्चविंशतिर्गण:। (साख्यकारिका, २२)

definiteness it moved towards definedness and definiteness. In its original state it was invisible, but as soon as it was defined it became visible. As this matter was all pervading or was in existence everywhere, its visibility could be explained only by the term *Mahat* (great or infinite). Here *Mahat* or infinite means limitless. The first stage in the evolution of *Prakriti* (matter) from invisibility to visibility was its emergence into *Mahat* or greatness, that is, infiniteness or limitless expanse in space which is equivalent to quantitative manifestation of *Prakriti* or matter.

As the process of evolution continued, infiniteness moved towards finiteness, that is, it moved from quantitative to qualitative development. What was the form of this qualitative development? Previously, there was no separate existence of any kind whatsoever. All was included in the one word *Prakriti* (matter) But henceforth in its movement evolution started manifesting itself from infiniteness to finiteness, from quantitative to qualitative existence. What is meant by this qualitative existence? It means that every object in course of evolution came to have its own identity, objectivity, or separate existence, which previously in a state of equipoise it did not possess This objectivity which separates one object from another was considered by Sankhya philosophy to be the *Ahankara* (individuality or I-ness or ego). *Ahankara* does not necessarily mean only the separate individual existence of the animate world. It embraces both the animate as well as the inanimate. The notion of separateness, finiteness, independent objective existence regardless of its being enshrined into an animate or inanimate form is called *Ahankara* or ego. This qualitative development is the second stage in the evolutionary process as propounded by the Sankhya philosophy In terms of Herbert Spencer's evolutionary theory Kapila's *Ahankara* would mean an evolution from infiniteness to finiteness, from homogeneity to heterogeneity

The third stage of evolution which now followed is supposed to include, according to Sankhya philosophy, the *Pancha Tanmatras* (five that-much-nesses) and the *Sthoola Bhootas* (five states of matter or solidified *Pancha Tanmatras*) The foundation for this twofold development was laid when each animate and inanimate object started having its own separate, independent, and individual existence, having its own *Ahankara* in the form of its own individuality or I-ness. As already stated, this twofold development consisted first of the *Pancha Tanmatras* (five that-much-nesses) manifesting themselves

and then of their solidification in the form of *Pancha Sthoola Bhootas* known as the five elements.

In the physical world the five elements, namely, earth, water, fire, air, ether or sky made their appearance. But their appearance was not sudden. Here also an evolutionary process was at work. First the initial vibrations appeared which have been termed as *Pancha Tanmatras* (five that-much-nesses). *Tan* or *Tat* means 'that', *Matra* means 'quantity'; 'that quantity' means 'that-muchness.' It is out of these *Pancha Tanmatra* vibrations that the five physical elements or *Sthoola Bhootas* (states of matter) came into being after the solidification of the *Pancha Tanmatras*. Hence, this third stage of evolution described by Sankhya philosophy divides itself into two parts: the first part consisted of *Pancha Tanmatras* and the second part comprised of *Sthoola Bhootas* (solidified states of matter). Thus there were ten physical products, namely, the 'five that-muchness elements' (*Pancha Tanmatras*) and the 'five physical elements' (*Sthoola Bhootas*) that went towards the completion of the third stage of evolution. 'That-much-ness' or *Tanmatra* means very, very little, almost imperceptible. All evolution is from very, very little or imperceptible From the imperceptible evolved the perceptible or *Sthoola Bhoota*.

Besides these ten physical products of evolution which had manifested themselves as a result of the operation of *Ahankara* or the principle of separate individual existence, there are eleven psychical elements of evolution which go to constitute the human being. They are: *Pancha Jnyana Indriyas* (five organs of perception), *Pancha Karma Indriyas* (five organs of action) and *Manas* (mind); and all these are also the manifestations of *Ahankara*.

The Sankhya philosophy thus stated that the whole evolution was an interplay of *Prakriti* with its twenty-four elements (matter, infiniteness, individuality, ten physical, and eleven psychical) with *Purusha* (the spirit) as the twenty-fifth. Fundamentally, it is *Ahankara*, that is, the principle of separate existence or the notion of ego, individuality, I-ness, heterogeneity, which is at the root of every evolutionary process.

In brief, the Sankhya philosophy postulates that the world, comprising of both the inanimate as well as the animate sectors, is the result of the interplay of twenty-five elements, the most supreme among these being *Prakriti* (matter) and *Purusha* (spirit). Whereas matter in the course of evolution differentiated itself into twenty-four

elements, spirit stood apart; and it is the combination or coming together of these twenty-four elements of matter on the one hand and the spirit on the other that makes the bubbles of life burst on the ocean of the universe.

Let us go a little deeper into the details of this process of evolution as postulated by Indian thinkers, because this is essential for understanding their outlook on and approach to culture

The spiritual substance, the spirit, is called *Purusha* in Sanskrit. *Pur* means the body or matter, *Shayana* means to reside in or rest; thus the one who resides in the body or in the world of matter is called *Purusha* Spirit and matter which are fundamentally different from and opposed to each other in their attributes and qualities, on coming together or meeting constitute a human being The logical question that now presents itself is: if spirit and matter are so much poles apart in each and every respect how then do they meet and continue together?

Sankhya philosophy has solved this problem by means of an illustration of the mutual help and co-operation, that can be extended to each other, by the blind and the lame to enable them to reach the place of their destination. True, the blind person cannot see and the lame cannot walk, but if the lame riding on the shoulders of the blind does the seeing and the blind confines his activity to walking, can they not reach their destination? Similarly, matter and spirit though diametrically opposed to each other, the one conscious and the other unconscious, on coming together, can also walk in the steps of the above mentioned pair of the lame and the blind and help to meet the deficiency of each other. Matter is inactive and inert, spirit is the embodiment of life itself, and in their conjunction when the spirit is clothed with matter, the two can travel along life's path, the one doing the seeing and the other the walking But matter must occupy the place only of an instrument with the help of which the spirit can unfold itself in all its higher forms and glory.

Let us now revert once again to the question: what are the twenty-four elements, according to Sankhya philosophy, which evolved as a result of the process of differentiation which started in *Prakriti* at the dawn of creation and which are subservient to the spirit and help it in its progress towards self-realization?

Let us first of all define *Prakriti*. *Prakriti*, as stated before, is the name given to the original state of matter in which the law of cause and effect, though dynamically present, did not operate and

in which the process of creation of both the animate as well as the inanimate was at a standstill This was the state of equipoise or *Sattvaguna*. In the second stage of evolution which followed, *Prakriti* did not remain in its quiescent condition. The equipoise was broken due to the inherent nature of *Prakriti* itself called *Rajoguna* and its causal attribute which was dynamically present, but was lying dormant hitherto, compelled it to assume an effectual form. When the potentially present but dormant law of cause and effect became operative, *Prakriti* converted itself from the quiescent to a non-quiescent state in which uniformity and homogeneity yielded place to differentiation and heterogeneity. This stage of heterogeneity in *Prakriti* has been called *Vikriti* in Sankhya philosophy. *Vikriti* was the name given to that state of matter in which the law of cause and effect which was till now latent in nature became patent and operative and the whole creation in its variegated form was on the threshold of manifesting itself. *Vikriti* meant the transformation and manifestation of the unmanifested, latent form of *Prakriti*.

This state in which, on the eve of manifestation, the whole of creation latent hitherto was so stupendously great in all its differentiation and heterogeneity has been called *Mahat* which means great or infinite. This is the second stage of evolution when the latent becomes the patent and a potentiality converts itself into an actuality As greatness, infiniteness, limitlessness, bespeak of quantity we have termed the *Mahat* or the second stage of evolution as the quantitative stage.

Ahankara or the Ego is the Basis of all Evolution

The stage is now set for the ushering in of the third phase of evolution which is the most important of all for understanding the cultural philosophy which we are trying to expound Hitherto matter had existed in an uniform and undifferentiated state, maintaining its own equilibrium. If this state of existence had continued, no creation would have been possible. It is absolutely essential for the ball of creation to start rolling that this uniformity and equilibrium be disturbed and the processes of differentiation and diversification be allowed to have their free play The whole process of creation rests on the assumption that each and every object will have its own separate existence, separate identity, separate individuality, its own I-ness, or its own ego This important factor which manifested itself in the third stage of the evolutionary process was

called *Ahankara* by Kapila in his philosophy *Mahat* or greatness is a quantity, *Ahankara* or ego is a quality, and so from the third stage of evolution the qualitative existence began.

Ahankara is neither a subject nor an object; it is only a conception or a principle. Each worldly object is separate and different from another. Whatever is in existence, be it animate or inanimate, has its own identity, its own individuality, its own I-ness This all-pervading conception of separate existence is called *Ahankara* or I-ness.

Kapila viewed everything in terms of the triplet of *Sattva, Rajas,* and *Tamas* which were called the *Gunas* or the attributes. *Sattva* is the condition of equipoise or unactivity, *Rajas* is the condition of activity, and *Tamas* is the condition of inactivity. The Gita says: 'All actions are being done by the modes or attributes (*Gunas*) of *Prakriti* (primordial matter) The fool whose mind is deluded by egoism considers himself to be the doer.'[1]

When *Ahankara* or the ego is dominated by *Sattva* or the state of equipoise and equilibrium, then *Manas* or mind comes into being and hence the very nature of the mind is such that howsoever perturbed it may be, it ultimately restores its equilibrium or reels back to its state of equipoise. A mind that always remains perturbed is said to be 'out of mind.' When *Ahankara* is dominated by *Rajas* or activity, the five organs of perception (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin) coupled with five organs of action (hands, feet, mouth, generative, and excretary organs) spring into being. These ten organs constitute the conscious elements of creation When *Ahankara* is dominated by *Tamas* or inactivity, then *Prithvi* (earth) and its concomitant *Gandha* (smell), *Apa* (water) and its concomitant *Rasa* (taste), *Tejas* (fire) and its concomitant *Roopa* (form), *Vayu* (air) and its concomitant *Sparsha* (touch), *Akasha* (sky or ether) and its concomitant *Shabda* (sound) make their appearance These are the ten unconscious elements of creation. Thus in all, there are twenty-four elements that go into the formation of the inanimate and the animate worlds, and they manifest themselves through the process of differentiation and heterogeneity set into motion in *Prakriti.* The spirit is the twenty-fifth and all these together account for the world of matter and life.

[1] प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणै. कर्माणि सर्वश.।
अहङ्कारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते।। (गीता, ३-२७)

We have seen throughout our discussion that *Ahankara* or the ego was the basic factor in the evolution of the mind as well as the ten organs of perception and action and the ten physical substances with their concomitants. *Ahankara* in Kapila's terminology does not mean pride in which sense the word is generally used in ordinary parlance. It is the notion of separate and independent existence, separate individuality, separate I-ness of inanimate and animate objects, exclusiveness of one from the other, each of which is proclaiming as it were to the world: 'I am'—'I am.' The earth that moves, the waters that flow, the fire that burns, the wind that blows, the sky that thunders, all this inanimate world is asserting, as it were, at its loudest, this fundamental principle emanating from its innate urge, namely, *Ahankara* or the ego. Men, animals, birds, insects, all this animate world with its organs of perception and action also voice forth the same *Ahankara*. All evolution of the world proceeds from *Ahankara*; differentiation, separateness, heterogeneity, individuality, I-ness are writ large all over; the chorus songs of *Ahankara* are sung everywhere which lies at the root of every manifestation in the world of matter and life.

Matter and its Manifestation Ahankara is Subservient to the Spirit

The principal manifestation in the evolutionary process of *Prakriti* (matter) is *Ahankara* or the ego, and the principal manifestation of *Purusha* (the spiritual principle) is *Atma* or the spirit. *Ahankara* is the product of *Prakriti* which is supposed to be blind, as has already been explained by the Sankhya philosophy, but it has a motive force and a strong impulse which propel it into motion. The spirit, on the other hand, has eyes to see but is lame and therefore is unable to do anything without a subservient means or an aiding instrument. Hence, how can matter and spirit function if not in harmony and co-operation? They work together, as has already been pointed out, in exactly the same manner as the blind and the lame perchance may find themselves driven to a common lot, and the one may ride over the shoulders of the other and move on to their journey's end. The rider is after all the principal actor in the drama and the ridden is only a beast of burden Thus does Kapila point out that matter is only a means for the spirit to enable it to reach its destined goal. And as *Ahankara* (the ego) is the principal manifestation of *Prakriti* (matter) and underlies all its variegated forms, it must necessarily act in a manner indicating that it is subservient to the

spirit and only helps it in all its efforts towards self-realization and self-fulfilment.

Ahankara Leads to Selfishness but Spirit Leads to Selflessness

It was the union of *Prakriti* and *Purusha* or matter and spirit that primarily set into gear the machinery of evolution and rolled out the carpet of the inanimate world along the road to activity. This activity was not the activity of life, it was the mechanical activity which manifested itself in the evolutionary processes of the material world But as regards the manifestation of life, the spirit did not associate itself with matter in its primordial or undifferentiated form. It was only after the first manifestation of *Ahankara,* which is the principal product of *Prakriti* or matter, and its union with the spirit that the animate world of life can be said to have been set into motion

The first outcome of the union of *Ahankara* with *Atma* or spirit is the strengthening of the notion of separateness, heterogeneity, the consciousness of 'I'—'I', and thereafter making the roots of these notions penetrate deeper and deeper into the stratum of creation 'I' and 'myself' are no doubt relative terms, and must automatically bring in as their co-relatives the concepts of 'you' and 'yourself.' 'Myself' means 'my'-self and 'your not'-self; 'yourself' means 'your'-self and 'my not'-self. Thus it is only this association of the spirit with the ego which results in this constant dualism and perennial struggle between self and not-self. Self or selfishness has its roots in the ego, but wherein should we trace the kernel of not-self or selflessness which is contradictory to *Ahankara* and still does persist to our common knowledge and experience?

Indian thought attributes the existence of not-self or selflessness to the spirit *Ahankara* (ego) and *Atma* (spirit) associated with one another to create the world because the one without the other like the blind without the lame was helpless, but as they are both basically different and opposite, one material and the other spiritual, they tend to pull each other in opposite directions. The ego tries its best to pull towards the self, selfishness, individual or separate existence, and the spirit towards not-self, selflessness, corporate or merged existence.

Ahankara, as already stated, is material in its content, and hence, its pulls will always be towards the world of matter, material possessions, material enjoyments, self, or selfishness. *Atma* or the spirit

is non-material, and hence its pushes will perpetually be towards dispossession, otherliness, not-self, or selflessness. Which of these two pulls should be encouraged, or which is the path that should be advocated for humanity to tread?

As has already been pointed out, the central theme underlying every current of Vedic culture is that *Prakriti* is blind, *Purusha* is lame, and like the characters of the story of the lame and the blind, it is *Purusha* that rides over the shoulders of *Prakriti* to reach its destination of spiritual realization. Vedic culture has proclaimed as it were from the very house-tops that matter is for the spirit and not the spirit for matter. In this wedlock between *Prakriti* and *Purusha,* matter and spirit, there is an inherent struggle between them for supremacy and domination. But as matter must be subservient to the spirit, the ultimate goal to be achieved and the path to be followed can only be the one resulting in the victory of spirit over matter, of selflessness over selfishness, of union over separateness, of cosmic existence over individual existence.

The basic concept of Vedic culture is that life starts with matter, but as the matter is only a means or an instrument for the progress of the spirit, one has only to begin with matter and material possessions but not stay permanently with them. One who proclaimed: 'Thou shalt not live by bread alone,' gave expression to a truism. Thus the teachings of the Vedic masters with respect to the world of matter and material possessions run parallel to the Biblical theme: 'What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?' If ultimately the world of matter and material possessions must be lost unto you, why should you lose yourself so very much unto them?

We begin with matter, with *Ahankara*, with the ego, but as the spirit proceeds on its onward journey of self-realization and self-fulfilment we must leave the matter, the material possessions, every selfishness, every narrowness, every separateness, and individual existence far, far behind, and continue our onward march in the midst of choruses and echoes of 'no more, no more.' The clear cut direction of the spirit's progress should be to begin with the inevitable selfishness and individualism, but to end with selflessness and the merging of one's self into the self of others. But is not the reverse the order of the day? We not only begin with matter and material possessions, with selfishness and individualism, but also permanently remain with them and even make them slope and line the way to our

graves Vedic culture condemns this path as the path of retrogression, a path not of evolution and progress, but of devolution and ruination.

The union of *Prakriti* and *Purusha*, matter and spirit, does in the initial stage give birth to selfishness and individualism This is perfectly natural and also inevitable, for without concentrating on the self no initial progress is possible. Reverting once again to our illustration from Kapila, does not the lame man with eyes to see, ride on the shoulders of the blind, only to be able to move on and proceed in the journey of life since he cannot reach his destination by himself? In the same manner, the spirit in its life's pilgrimage must always ride on the shoulders of matter because this laborious journey can only be performed with the help and co-operation of *Prakriti*. It is thus that the material element dominates, and the physical world is not only with us but is naturally too much with us all our lives We cannot and would not be able to move even one step forward without the help of *Prakriti* or matter. But as the lame riding over the shoulders of the blind dispenses with his services on reaching his destination, even so in this pilgrimage of life as we approach the promised land, the spirit and the spiritual world must dominate every material conception; and all selfishness and individualism must make way to herald in the good of all mankind with resounding trumpets

Journey of Life only Begins but does Not End with Ahankara

The course of evolution, development, and progress of life have revealed that the individual tends to form various institutions, like the family, the group, as well as religious, cultural, economic, and political organizations In all these units, it is the individual's I-ness, his *Ahankara*, his ego, his self-concentric outlook that manifests itself. In every institution *Ahankara* or the ego dominates. What is the principle underlying the continuous strain of thought in terms of my wife, my children, my house, my property, if not the manifestation of *Ahankara*?

The first crystallization of *Ahankara* is in the form of the consciousness of individuality, upholding the concepts of 'I-ness' and 'myness' But *Ahankara* does not fully unfold itself merely in the consciousness of one's individuality; its monster starts engulfing the other social units also, the first to be attacked being the family. What else is the family if not the ego of the individual spreading its wings?

There must hardly be a handful of the teeming millions whose ego stops its progress at the family level; the vast majority of men go further and enlarge their ego into the units of kinships, consanguinous groups, religious, cultural, economic, and political organizations. Thus slowly but surely the concept of the country and the nation also spring into being.

In all this process, it is the seed of *Ahankara*, I-ness, my-ness, the self, the ego in the individual that takes root, sprouts, and grows into the tree that overshadows the human soil. All this unfoldment and growth, let us once again repeat, is naught else but the unfoldment of *Ahankara*. It began with 'I'; not being content with the mere 'I' it gave birth to the family, to 'my wife,' 'my children,' and finally saturated with greed it emerges into the concepts of my group, my society, my country, my nation.

The great saint Yajnyavalkya of Upanishadic fame, having viewed with stoic cynicism this undercurrent of 'I'—'I' and 'my'—'my' pervading all our social, economic, and political institutions, declares: 'In reality, wife, children, family, brotherhood, society, country, nation, are all the unfoldment of the ego. The wife loves her husband not because she is his wife but because he serves her ego; the husband loves his wife not because she is his wife but because she serves his ego: both love their children not because they are their children but because they serve their ego.'[1] Although it is no doubt true that Yajnyavalkya in this passage holds a very grotesque outlook, but this is only the logical and inevitable conclusion of a highly materialistic conception of life. If this body and the physical world are the only realities of existence, if there is nothing that survives the body after its disintegration and nothing beyond the physical world, why should we not make the enjoyments of the flesh the be-all and the end-all of our existence. Thus what is the purpose of, or what good can there be in selflessly serving the family, the society, the country, and the nation? When we die the world ends for us, so why should we worry about the beyond and the hereafter?

[1] न वा अरे पत्युः कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति, आत्मनस्तु कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति।
न वा अरे जायायै कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति, आत्मनस्तु कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति।
न वा अरे पुत्राणां कामाय पुत्राः प्रिया भवन्ति,
आत्मनस्तु कामाय पुत्राः प्रिया भवन्ति। (वृहदारण्यक, २–५)

But Yajnyavalkya was not a materialist He placed the materialistic outlook in all its nakedness only to expose its hollowness. After having done so, he further expounds his interpretation as follows: 'The wife loves her husband not because she is his wife but because she loves the real self that is the *Atma.* Even the ego or *Ahankara* which is the fountainhead of life is for the real self, for the *Atma*, and so we must direct all our energies to the understanding and realization of the *Atma.*'[1]

Yajnyavalkya by making this subtle distinction between the ego and the self, that is, between *Ahankara* and *Atma,* put his finger on the very spot where the central theme of Vedic culture lay The central idea is to understand the separate entities of *Prakriti* and *Purusha,* of *Ahankara* and *Atma,* of the ego and the self; and further to grasp that though *Prakriti,* or *Ahankara,* or ego may be at the bottom of all creation, still *Prakriti* is for *Purusha, Ahankara* is for *Atma,* ego is for self, and not vice versa. Yajnyavalkya clearly states that all is for *Atma,* for the self; even *Ahankara,* the ego is for *Atma,* the self, or the soul. Life only begins with ego but does not end with it

Conflict between the Ego and the Spirit

The basic theme underlying every current in Vedic culture is that from the dawn of creation, or from the very starting point in the pilgrimage of life, there has always been both co-operation as well as conflict between the ego and the spirit, between *Prakriti* and *Purusha,* between *Ahankara* and *Atma.* This is due to the fundamental fact that as neither of them can proceed individually or separately, the two elements by virtue of necessity come together; but once they thus start operating each begins to pull apart from the other because they are diametrically opposite to each other in their very nature

It is only when *Prakriti* or *Ahankara* dominates the scene that *Atma* mistakes *Prakriti* as its real self and loses its entity in the world of matter and sense-objects. But on the other hand if *Purusha* or *Atma* is in the forefront, the spirit treats *Prakriti* as not-self and uses it only as a means for accomplishing its task of self-realization. Yajnyavalkya opines that when the spirit forgets its real nature, it becomes subservient to the world of matter and gets so much entangled into the net-work of *Prakriti,* that is, amongst wife, children, and

[1] आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्य: श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्य.।
(बृहदारण्यक, २–५)

property, that it begins to regard these as its real self, these as *Atma*.

But how can these aspects which are part and parcel of *Prakriti* ever be considered to be identical with *Atma*? According to Yajnyavalkya, the spirit must be regarded as distinct from matter because it is only thus that true vision and perspective can dawn, and as soon as you realise this distinction between the two, your entire outlook on life must change. The origin of the universe is no doubt from *Ahankara*, but with *Ahankara* dominant and *Atma* dormant we have one outlook on life, but this outlook changes when the scales are reversed.

When the spirit lurks in the background, *Ahankara* and selfishness will generate naught else but further *Ahankara* and further selfishness, and every wave of development will only surge towards selfishness and more selfishness. Viewing the situation in this perspective, when we say that the wife loves the husband not for the love of him but for the love of herself, it can only mean that the wife loves the husband for her selfish ends She will continue to love him for her own personal pleasures, but the moment these are denied to her she will not hesitate to cast him aside. Similarly, when we say that the husband loves his wife not for the love of her but for the love of himself, it tantamounts to saying that the husband loves his wife for his own selfish ends. He will love her for his personal pleasure and as soon as that pleasure is denied to him he will let her recede into the background.

But just consider a case in which the spirit instead of remaining subordinate to matter is quite wide awake and asserts its dominance. In such a condition, *Ahankara* instead of generating further *Ahankara* and selfishness, instead of concentrating within or on itself, will move away from itself, from *Ahankara* and selfishness, and this in turn will generate selflessness and enable the same *Ahankara* to realise its fulfilment in self-effacement. In the light of this background, when we say that the wife loves the husband not for the love of him but for the love of herself, it means that the wife loves the husband not for her selfish ends but for the realization of the supreme end, for which both she and her mate set out on this pilgrimage of life with the hope and aspiration that they would be complementary to each other. This is equivalent to saying that they dived into the ocean of life only to swim successfully out of it, that they are enjoying the objects of the world of matter solely to get away from their attraction after having realized their hollowness.

They began with selfishness and *Ahankara* only to attain selflessness and otherliness.

Ahankara and *Atma* conjointly set out on the journey of life. When *Atma* became dormant, *Ahankara* became dominant and selfishness and nothing else but selfishness was the outcome. On the other hand, if *Atma* becomes supreme, *Ahankara* must recede in the background and become subservient to *Atma*; every selfishness must disappear and matter must be regarded as only the servant of the spirit. It was at this that Yajnyavalkya has hinted as being the direction of progress of the spirit as visualized by the Vedic seers. The whole enigma turns on the word *Swa* (self). What is *Swa* or what is self ? Is matter thy self or is spirit thy self? 'Know thyself' says Yajnyavalkya! An echo of the same thought was heard in Greece when Socrates voiced similar utterances. It is no doubt true that everything is for the self, for you and for me.

But what is this self, this 'you,' this 'me'? Is it *Prakriti* or is it *Purusha*, ego or spirit, *Ahankara* or *Atma*? Vedic culture trumpeted from the housetops that this *Swa* (self) is not matter but spirit, not *Prakriti* but *Purusha*, not *Ahankara* but *Atma*. So it is for *Purusha* that *Prakriti* is the handmaid, it is for *Atma* that the family, the relatives, the society, the country, and the nation all exist; and the world of matter is only to help the *Atma* in its evolution and emancipation *Atma* or spirit is the end, *Ahankara* or ego constitutes the means; ego exists for the spirit and not the spirit for the ego; it is the spirit and the spirit alone that is the self, everything else must be looked upon as not-self.

The Place of Atma in Spiritual Outlook on Life

When one realizes that *Atma* is the foundation on which the citadel of creation rests, one's entire outlook on life changes In microcosm, one has to answer the question: what is this body? Is my body my real self? If the body is my real self, I have obviously to live and die for it, its preservation must be the only interest of all my activities, and my life's quest must necessarily be directed towards this end. But if the body is only the instrument for a spiritual entity which makes use of it for the fulfilment of some higher objective, then my real self is not the body but the spirit. And just as the preservation of the body is in my interest, even so, occasions might arise when the shaking off of the attachment to this mortal coil may be a far more imperative need of the hour.

The Vedic ideal treats the body as the conveyor of the spirit. Does not the Vedic seer in Katha Upanishad say: '*Atma* is the charioteer, body is the chariot'?[1] It is not the body that has to make use of the spirit, rather it is the spirit that has to make use of the body. What holds true for microcosm, the body, can be applied with equal force to macrocosm, the world of matter. Just as the body is for the spirit or *Atma,* even so *Prakriti* or the world of matter is for the Super Spirit or *Parama Atma.* The spirit must avail itself of the body, not body the spirit, we must enjoy the world of matter and not let the world enjoy us; this is the strain that flits across the air out of the songs sung by the Vedic bards.

Yajnyavalkya, the sage of Upanishadic fame, gave a novel and original interpretation to the word *Swa* (self) This self, he said, was of two types In the first type of self, it is the matter which becomes a master and the spirit assumes the place of a servant, or the ego getting the better of the spirit makes *Ahankara* dominate over *Atma* It is only under the influence of this type of self, that selfishness begets greater selfishness, the urge to enjoy the physical pleasures of life becomes deep rooted, and the feeling of attachment to the objects of desire grows stronger. In the second form of self it is the spirit that comes to its own; it makes the body and matter subserve its behests, thus making *Atma* the master and *Ahankara* the servant The outcome of this second kind of self wherein 'I' and self mean the *Atma* and not the *Ahankara,* selfishness begets selflessness, and the feeling of attachment to the worldly objects yields place to non-attachment. According to the interpretation given by Vedic culture, the real meaning of the self is the *Atma* The one who treats *Atma* as the real self leads an altogether different life from the one who treats *Prakriti* or *Ahankara* as the real self The former is of the heaven, heavenly; the latter is of the earth, earthy

Today, the *Atma* ceases to occupy its due place of prominence, or for that matter any place at all, in the schemes of planning undertaken by men In the light of current thought, the self is naught else but the body coupled with the world of matter This accounts for the increasing tempo of selfishness in all our social behaviour. The individual, the family, the brotherhood, the different groups, societies, countries, nations, all resist one another for their own sel-

[1] आत्मान रथिन विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु। (कठ, ३-३)

fish aims, objectives, and ends. But Vedic culture does not regard the body and the world of matter as being equivalent to self. Self is the *Atma,* something over, above, and beyond the body and the world of matter. Its existence demands no proof, it is always present, everyone feels it and experiences it. It pervades into every creature, be it man, animal, bird, or insect The Vedic hymn rightly states: 'One who sees all creatures like beads threaded into *Atma* and *Atma* pervading into all creatures has a true vision and is above doubts.'[1]

All are my equal, in all this same *Atma* is ever present, everywhere its spiritual beauty is gradually unfolding itself, everyone and everything is but the outcome of this one and the same principle of spirituality; this is a new outlook emanating from the age-old writings of the Vedic teachers which the materialistic world of today needs for its daily living and salvation. The world originated, no doubt, from *Ahankara* but it may proceed in the course of its evolution in two opposite directions. If *Ahankara* in the sense of self were to be interpreted as the body and nothing but the body, then this same self will develop only in one direction. But if this very *Ahankara* may be metamorphosed and spiritualized by the touch of *Atma* just as a piece of iron behaves magnet-like by the touch of a magnet, then this very self can be drawn towards and made to develop in another direction And the banner of Vedic culture precisely points towards this another or the *Atmic* direction

Is it not a fact that when we are steeped in the grossest forms of materialism and are engrossed as it were in the deepest acts of selfishness, the spark of spiritual consciousness which lurks within us lying dormant, suddenly catches flame and we find ourselves moving from the dark dungeons of selfishness towards the conflagration of selflessness gathering momentum? However selfish one may be, it is a common experience and knowledge that one effaces oneself for and in the interest of the family. Can the pleasures that a mother gets by subjecting herself to hardship for the sake of her child be ever compared to the feelings she would have if, surrounded by all the material comforts, she found her child in distress? On the other hand, consider a mother's joy and pride when she sees her child smiling and happy as if she had the kingdom

[1] यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतानि आत्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।
सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विचिकित्सति ।। (यजुर्वेद, ४०–६)

of the world at her command. And do we not come across men who sacrifice themselves, their family, and their all for the sake of their country and their nation ? This is not mere idealism; it is the most practical philosophy of living clothed in the words of Confucious who said: 'He who performs only self-interested actions will make himself many enemies.' Shri Ramakrishna carrying this philosophy to a higher plane remarked that just as the sun and the moon cannot be reflected in muddy waters, the Almighty cannot shine through a heart that is obsessed with 'I' and 'mine'.

All this can only happen as and when *Ahankara* becomes spiritualized by the touch of *Atma*; and instead of the ego overpowering the spirit, the gigantic fortress of *Atma* overshadows the citadel of *Ahankara*. When this *Atmic* outlook broadens its horizons and *Ahankara* surrenders to *Atma*, then selflessness shines forth from out of the skyline, and selfishness goes behind the dark moisture bearing clouds from whence it rains upon the earth in the form of the precious drops and dews of selflessness. It is only when *Atma* establishes its supremacy by recruiting *Ahankara* in its service that every act of selfishness begets selflessness, because in the eyes of the spirit selflessness itself lies in the interest of self. This cycle of selfishness turning into selflessness, the latter by itself becoming the so called selfishness and once again converting itself into selflessness, is the continuous process which is set into motion when *Atma* holds the plan of life firmly in its grip. In an *Atmic* scheme every selfishness is for self-effacement, every selflessness is for perpetuation. Who does not know that parents efface their selfish interests for the sake of their children, and the children again grown into parents sacrifice themselves for the next generation. Even so do the blades of the scissors of selfishness-cum-selflessness cut through the fabric of life and shape it into spiritual garments with which each generation is clothed.

The wheel of selfishness-selflessness needs no fuel to gear it into action. It works like an automaton. It commences on its own and works, or revolves in perfect tune, rhythm, and harmony. We may or may not believe in the existence of *Atma*, but the process described above must and does go on unhampered. It is *Atma* alone that is the ultimate reality. The intricacies of the labyrinth of life are disentangled only if we proceed on the assumption of *Atma* being the master of the situation and the captain of our ship of existence It is only on the basis of this assumption that we are in a position

to solve the mystery as to why in this world of stark naked selfishness does selflessness bubble up from its innermost depths, why in this world of untruth, corruption, and dishonesty, do truth, righteousness, and honesty struggle hard to manifest themselves. Do we not all experience that as life advances, selfishness fails and selflessness shines forth, soliciting as it were for an opportunity, to bless the world. Yes, the world needs these blessings today, so let us all have them In this context we are reminded of Swami Vivekananda when he said: 'The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt'

If we do not believe in the existence or the operation of this spiritual principle or entity, namely, the *Atma,* the fact that selflessness is felt by one and all as a virtue, despite all the advantages accruing from selfishness, is a matter which remains unexplained and unexplainable. Vedic culture is not so much concerned with proving the existence of *Atma Atma* or no *Atma*, there is no denying the fact that in spite of untruth, truth prevails, in spite of dishonesty, honesty prevails, in spite of darkness, light prevails. The Vedic seers opined only this much that these facts are better understood, explained, and grasped with a working hypothesis that the spirit is a separate entity from the material elements

How does selfishness give rise to selflessness when both are contradictory? According to the Vedic masters, this contradiction is not inherent but apparent. Is it not common knowledge that only a ripe fruit yields a healthy seed which, when sown, will in its turn grow into a tall tree? Similarly, it is only ripened selfishness that alone can generate into selflessness Every act of selfishness is solely the outcome of any unfulfilled desire When the desires and their propelling forces exhaust themselves, selflessness is born out of selfishness; in other words, selflessness is the ripened fruit of selfishness. But if without exhausting the force of desire, one attempts to step into the arena of selflessness, the inevitable result will be that of one being neither fish nor fowl nor good herring If one continues to indulge in the enjoyment of sense-objects even after the desire has died out, the situation can be compared to the stuffing of the stomach with undigestible edibles when there is no hunger to justify this intake. And to run away from the sense-objects, when the desire for their enjoyment is at its height, is like throwing away the food whilst the stomach is still craving for satisfaction. Selflessness and

desirelessness can only be the offspring of the fulfilment of desire. Though this sounds contradictory it is nevertheless the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Vedic culture has a great message to deliver to the war-worn weary world The message is· *the spiritual principle though invisible,* still forms the warp and woof of the fabric of matter and the material world All existence and all life emanates from it It is due to this spiritual principle that every selfishness terminates in selflessness, all dependence paves the way towards independence, every attachment leads towards non-attachment, and truth, righteousness, and honesty triumph over untruth, dishonesty, and corruption Bondage is yielding place to freedom, egoism is making way to usher in altruism, and love of self is being replaced by love for humanity at large. There is a still small voice within us continuously whispering in our ears that the world is ephemeral, that if not today, then tomorrow, this bubble of life must burst and *Ahankara* will have to surrender itself to the spiritual principle of our being. It is in this outlook and vision alone that the welfare of the individual, the family, the society, the country, the nation, and the world at large, has had its foundation and will ever continue to do so It was the acceptance of this truth that made Swami Vivekananda preach : 'Self-sacrifice, not self-assertion, is the highest law of the Universe and the difference between God and the Devil is in nothing except in unselfishness and selfishness'

CHAPTER VII

THE LIFE PRINCIPLE AND UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

WHAT ARE the units into which the social structure can be divided? They are the individual, the family, the group, the society, the country, and the nation Each of these units is set one against the other, individual against individual, family against family, group against group, country against country, and nation against nation. What is the cause of this divided and ever warring humanity? It is due, as we have seen in the last chapter, to the world having originated from *Ahankara* or the egoistic principle According to Indian philosophy, egoism is the mightiest principle manifesting itself through the entire universe, pervading in the tiniest atom in the world of matter and the earliest amoeba in the world of life As the writhing serpent emerges stronger from each cast that it leaves behind, even so the serpent of *Ahankara* gathered strength or momentum as it forged its way through each and every layer of the evolutionary strata. And finally today it emerges as the principle that dominates the entire world

When this *Ahankara* or ego successfully scales its heights in the individual, the latter starts thinking in terms of 'my wife, my children' which is nothing but an extension and fulfilment of the egoistic urge which is common to all of us When one's ego is not satisfied with one's supremacy over the family, this 'I' and 'my' principle converts itself into an insatiable hunger for mastery over fellow beings and finds satisfaction in the formation of clubs, groups, and societies A membership or masterdom of these organisations makes one feel that one's importance is further penetrating, and thus one's egoistic horizons are further widened because they are now no longer confined to one's narrow individuality or limited family, but rather, they are equated with the group or organisation into which the individual has made his entrance It is the ego of some domineering personality that reigns supreme in every social organisation or group. Though it is claimed that the voice of the group prevails, a little peep behind the curtain clearly reveals that it is only the strong individual's *Ahankara* that holds its sway in the family, in the group, and in society. This ego or *Ahankara* is interwoven like the warp and woof into the texture of social structure and thought.

When religion becomes the dominating factor in society, the individual develops a bent of mind that he is a Hindu, a Muslim, a Jew, or a Christian and that whatsoever he opines or utters, that alone is the truth and all else is untruth. Is not history replete with instances of Jehads and Inquisitions carried out by Muslim and Christian fanatics to destroy root and branch those whom they considered infidels? Innocent blood has been mercilessly shed in the cause of religion and with the name of God on the lips of the fanatics. When nation or country becomes the dominating factor in society, the same individual begins to think in the strain: 'I am an Indian, or an Egyptian, or a German, or a Russian, and it is myself, my nation, my country that alone has the right to exist, all else, namely, other nations, other countries must meet the fate of annihilation at the hands of my nation and my country.' What were the hopes and aspirations of Mussolini and Hitler? Did they not wish to bring sovereign sway and mastery to their nations? And did not their aspirations fall a prey to the booming guns of destruction and bring about misery for millions of men, women, and children? All these occurrences are the result of certain irresistible impulses of *Ahankara* trying to manifest themselves. If one were to unroll the carpet of time, the designs would clearly indicate that every organisation, group, or country formed by man bears the imprint of his dominating ego But human nature, as it is made, does not like to accept or face up to this unpleasant charge. When this fact is outspokenly proclaimed it is called the dictatorship of a single individual; and when a person fights shy of the appellation it is very often termed as party dictatorship or party rule. The basic element in all these social processes is *Ahankara* or the ego.

The founders of Vedic culture felt a little repugnant at this fact of *Ahankara* spreading its wings to bring every aspect of human life under its fold. They realised that if the forces of *Ahankara* were allowed to have their free and full play, it would only mean the ushering in of disunity in the place of unity, disharmony in the place of harmony, conflict and hatred in place of co-operation and love; but they also realised that, since the dawn of creation, any social organisation that man has ever conceived of can only be attributed to the propulsion of his ego This is borne out by the fact that the individual always tends to extend the area over which his ego can hold sway, and hence it is that from the family the ego finds its way into the group, and from the group to the country or the nation

In all these cases, the cardinal point is that the ego of one or certain individuals dominates over that of the others. Those who are dominated smart under the yoke of suppression, and wait for the wheel to turn when they will be in a position to dominate over the weaker ones. Conflict is the inevitable sequence of any social process having its foundations in *Ahankara.* This philosophy of the Vedic masters found its echo in the teachings of Christ when he said. 'He who exalts himself shalt be humbled and he who humbles himself shalt be exalted,' and that 'the last shall be the first and the first last'

The egoism of an individual, of a family, of a group, necessarily implies one's superiority which brings in its wake the other's inferiority It is out of these two contradictory feelings of inferiority and superiority that every conflict, diversity, hatred, and division ensues; and in this clash of egos only a few survive to lord it over the others, regardless of whether they be individuals, groups, countries, or nations. What happens when the ego of any of the above mentioned units dominates over that of the others? The suppressed ones flare up with jealousy and the seed of every conflict, disunity, and conspiracy is sown between individuals and individuals, groups and groups, nations and nations, countries and countries. The *Ahankara* of the weaker ones tends only to be suppressed, but is never destroyed and there it lies lurking for an opportunity to wreak its vengeance upon its erstwhile oppressors. This is the reason why in a social organisation built upon the foundations of *Ahankara,* as ours is, man can only shed the blood of his fellow beings; nations and countries can only proceed in their warring designs against one another. But is it not a fact that men also love their fellowmen, and nations and countries do live in harmony and peace amongst themselves in spite of selfishness generated by *Ahankara*? They do so not because *Ahankara* can ever bring men, nations, and countries closer to one another, but because the basic element in the structure of the universe is *Atma tattva* or the spiritual principle which is constantly struggling to manifest itself; and for the ultimate manifestation of which all the forces of creation are summoned to tune in with the divine plan.

But, nevertheless, *Atma tattva* is not in a position to dispense with *Ahankara,* for without its help, it cannot move, but at the same time, it cannot allow itself to be permanently dominated by *Ahankara* Thus it is an unending duel which goes on between these two prin-

ciples; so long as *Ahankara* holds its sway, struggles, wars, and bloodshed are the inevitable consequences. However, the rays of light issuing forth from the lamp of Vedic culture point out that the direction and development of the world is from *Ahankara* to *Atma tattva,* from war and bloodshed to peace and harmony, because the chartered out destiny of the universe is naught else but the manifestation of the spiritual principle by making use of the world of matter as a means to its end.

True Evolution is to Obliterate the Ego and Awaken the Spirit

Let us examine what the world is, because it is only from this knowledge and understanding that we can realise and appreciate what it should or ought to be. We have already stated in a previous chapter that the world is an interplay of the forces of *Prakriti* and *Purusha,* or *Ahankara* and *Atma tattva,* or the egoistic and the spiritual principles *Ahankara* is not the self. It is the immediate product of *Prakriti.* The evolution, development, and expansion of *Ahankara* is not the evolution, development, and expansion of *Atma tattva* or the spiritual principle, but of *Prakriti* or the world of matter. *Purusha* or *Atma tattva* is the self.

Prakriti, according to Sankhya philosophy, has three attributes, namely, *Sattvaguna* (unactivity), *Rajoguna* (activity), and *Tamoguna* (inactivity). The nature of *Prakriti* is such that *Sattvaguna* is dominated by *Rajoguna,* and *Rajoguna* is dominated by *Tamoguna* Consequently, it is *Rajoguna* and *Tamoguna* which are the dominating factors of the structure of the world of matter and of life *Rajoguna* and *Tamoguna* together account for jealousy, hatred, conflict, struggle, war, and bloodshed prevailing in the world.

The logical outcome of the combination and concentration of *Rajasika* and *Tamasika* forces of *Prakriti* and *Ahankara* in the individual is that he tends to organise groups, countries, and nations. This provides further scope for igniting the fire of his ego, of 'I' and 'my,' of his superiority over others; the big 'I', the small 'you,' which ultimately results in setting man against man, family against family, country against country, and nation against nation But all this happens because we forget the spiritual principle and let the material principle of *Ahankara* have the upper hand.

True evolution is not the expansion of *Ahankara,* but the manifestation of *Atma tattva* hidden behind but peeping out through the veils of the world of matter Any effort at obliterating the ego and

vakening the soul is an effort in the right direction. An individual ust, as he proceeds along the path of progress, prevent the urges ' the ego from materialisation. He should form the family not as ı extension of *Ahankara*, but as a restraint upon it; the group, the ountry, or nation, not as an egoistic organisation but as a result of ıe mounting sacrifices of the ego. When a nation or a country born, not as a result of somebody's dominating ego, but as the sult of self-effacement, no conflict, struggle, war, or bloodshed en-ıes. It is *Ahankara* and only *Ahankara* which creates division, versity, and hatred; but the moment this ego is subdued, the era of nity, love, peace, and harmony automatically sees its first light of awn. Vedic culture laid the foundation of universal brotherhood nd world peace on this chain of thought

go is the Cause of all Selfishness

The world social structure of today stands on the mount of selfish-ess All our doings have their springs as well as their gushing rivu-ts along the sides of this mount. The question that confronts us : shall we be profited by doing this or that? If the answer is in ıe affirmative, we go ahead and do it, otherwise we retreat with ır backs to the wall What is the basis of all this selfishness? It is *hankara*. The moment we think of ourselves as the centre of all ctivities *Ahankara* steps in, and with it comes its companion selfish-ess. Everybody talks as well advocates selflessness, but so long as ır concepts move around the circle of my-ness and thy-ness, how ın we get rid of selfishness? The mount of selfishness can be velled down only by digging out the worms of *Ahankara* from the yers of its soil

Ahankara, as we have said before, is a philosophical term used by ıe Sankhya school of thought and which in ordinary parlance ıeans selfishness. A social structure erected on the foundations of lfishness cannot but have as its roof tiles the setting of man against ıan, family against family, group against group, nation against ation, and country against country. As selfishness is at the bottom f all our social organisations, instead of moving forward, man is eating a retreat. *The institution of the family of today which should* ave contributed to the advancement of man is pulling him back-ards. Those of us who are engaged in the tasks of social welfare ecome indifferent towards it after marriage. The individual earns nd sets aside several lacs to enable his wife and children to live a

life of ease and luxury, whilst he allows his servants to starve and feel the pinches of cold. We labour and sweat all our life in amassing large fortunes so that our inheritors may lead an easygoing existence. Social workers, who are always supposed to be above-board, when faced with family problems have been known to fall preys to many evils.

Cromwell's glorious achievement was his success in getting the English throne rescued from the tyranny of the British kings, but he fell a prey to the lure of making his family into a royal house. Napoleon fought for France, but he also successfully founded a royal dynasty of his own, thus dragging his country into the very quagmire out of which he had set about to liberate it. India as well as other countries have known bloody battles traceable to family tussles Was not the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet enacted out of a family feud? And the cause of it, to use Shakespeare's words: 'Two households, both alike in dignity, .. From ancient grudge break to new mutiny.' Once again, to describe the outcome in Shakespeare's language 'civil blood makes civil hands unclean,' and further, 'A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life,' and 'Do with their death bury their parents' strife.' What does all this indicate? It clearly shows that when an individual concentrates all his efforts in selfishness, in *Ahankara,* in the building up of his egoistic urge by way of the family, he is withheld and tied down in this narrow groove, and prevented from doing service to his nation or his country.

But does man find satisfaction in being thus imprisoned in this narrow cage? Does he feel the expansion of the self while doomed to labour, like worms and insects, to take care of his offspring? Would he not like to share the joy of the skylark whom Shelley ecstatically addressed: 'Hail to thee, blithe spirit! Bird thou never wert'? Does an individual not feel immense joy when he shakes off all the bondages which confine him to the narrow self and starts on the pilgrimage of life, expanding his self day by day, identifying himself not only with the members of his family but with humanity at large, thus helping to establish the universal brotherhood of man on earth? If it be true that such an expansion of self opens up wide floodgates of joy for the one who lives for others and not for himself, why then do men of the world live and die for themselves and selfishness is the only goal of their existence?

The answer is that *Ahankara* comes in the way and blocks our movement towards self expansion. At first, *Ahankara* blocks the path

to progress of *Atma tattva* in the family; if it breaks off the family shackles its progress is blocked by the group, by the society, by the nation, and by the country one belongs to It is my family, my group, my party, my nation, my country; this *Ahankara* element of identifying one's self with various organizations and institutions is the root cause of all the differences, hatreds, struggles, and troubles so widely prevalent in the world of today *Ahankara* keeps one in bondage, *Atma tattva* sets the individual free; *Ahankara* is satisfied by imprisoning itself into narrow grooves, *Atma tattva* delights in freeing itself from all such encasements; *Ahankara* is a product of *Prakriti* (matter) and so it is natural for it to derive satisfaction in being bound down to the objects of the world of matter, *Atma tattva* is not only distinct from matter but is also above and beyond matter and so feels joy only in breaking off the bondages of matter. In this conflict between *Ahankara* and *Atma tattva*, when the latter overpowers the former and makes use of it as its servant, it is called emancipation and liberation, or *Moksha* by the Vedic seers

How Vedic Culture Overcame Ahankara or the Ego

The bondage of *Ahankara* is so strong that it is not easy to get rid of it The great thinkers of the world have jointly as well as severally tried to plan out a way for the redemption of *Atma tattva* from the grasping tentacles of *Ahankara* We come into coflict with others simply because we associate ourselves so strongly with any one of the social units, be it the family, the group, the nation, or the country, that we identify our well-being with its prosperity and our interest with its progress. This leads us to dissociate ourselves from the other individuals as well as units and to regard them as our enemies. When will we realize that whilst forming a family we must disentangle ourselves from it, and whilst organizing a group, a society, or a nation, we must not treat persons belonging to other similar units as aliens ? When will we be able to utter as spontaneously as Christ did the words: 'Who is a mother, who is a brother ? If anyone does the will of my Father, he is my mother, my brother, my sister, and all '

Plato had struck upon a novel device to loosen the bonds of the ego What is the shape of the bond that the ego takes? It creates attachment to all that falls within its purview. Plato thought that all attachment began with the individual identifying himself with his offspring. The first lesson, therefore, in getting rid of this all-em-

bracing influence of the ego is to renounce one's child and to entrust it to the care of other parents. When you call a child 'bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh,' when you treat him as your other self, only then your affection for him becomes so deep that you usurp the rights of others and start building up property for him as you would for yourself. If children could be interchanged, the gross form of *Ahankara* would automatically subside and the family system instead of pushing the individual backward in the race of life's unfoldment would help him to move forward.

Plato's thought though ideal is most impractical. Vedic culture had developed another idea which it put into practice. The concept was that parents only give birth to the children; in effect, all children belong to the State. Parents cannot propertly look after them, nor can they provide them with all that they need for their full development. And hence if they belonged to the State, they would all have an equal right to education, to health, and to the other opportunities. They should therefore be weaned away from their parents at about the age of six or seven and put into institutions managed by educational experts, wherein ample opportunities should be provided to every child irrespective of caste, creed, or status. They would belong from now onwards to the State and it was the responsibility of the State to fix them up in life in the jobs that suited them best. When parents were freed from such a responsibility, their attachment to the family and the children did not come in the way of their *Atmic* development. And also consider the serenity with which they would accept life's challenges, for does not the Buddha say: 'It is only from endearment, attachment, and craving that grief, fear, and sorrow springs; he who is wholly free from these for him there is no grief, no fear, and no sorrow'? On another occasion continuing in the same strain he admonished: 'the longings for jewels, ornaments, wife, and children are more powerful bonds than those of iron, wood, or hemp'. It is the duty of the State to encourage institutions where such a dispassionate outlook can be cultivated.

Such institutions existed in India in the Vedic period which were called *Gurukulas*; *Guru* means the teacher and *kula* means the family. A child, at the proper age at which he could manage himself, was removed from the smaller family of the parents and was placed in the so regarded larger family of the teacher. Here he found himself amongst other children of his age whom he was taught to

ː upon as his brothers. The basic idea was that he was divorced n one smaller *kula* (family) only to be placed into a larger ı, though this larger family unit was that of the teacher. Thus the child begin his early life in an atmosphere of detachment, of *Ahankarization*, of effacing the ego, and of treating all his comıions as belonging to the same bigger family.

he accusation that the *Gurukula* system of education generates eeling of non-attachment towards parents is not its demerit, but her a merit, because it is non-attachment that has to be aspired by one and all. One has to learn the lesson of non-attachment of effacing the ego (*Ahankara*) which keeps one bound down to e's particular family, particular group, particular nation, particu- country. The lesson of lessons, the spiritual lesson one has to bibe, is the one of regarding all nations and all countries as one's n. The ideal of Vedic culture is to consider the whole of mankind one family, one nation, and one country. How can this lesson, of ating all living beings as one's family and the whole world as one's me, be learnt without a proper training from the most susceptible rly age? The institutional limitations raised by *Ahankara* must be velled to the ground, the limitations of I-ness and my-ness woven ound the ideas of the family, the group, the nation, and the country ust be completely washed away into the seething foam of life.

There was also another institution known as *Vanaprastha Ashrama* hich engendered a feeling of detachment and a desire to outgrow ıe narrowness of *Ahankara*. *Vanaprastha* (going into the forest) ıeans to move from the house state into a houseless state. Accordıg to the Vedic conception, there should come a time, in the life f each one of us, when we should break off the petty narrow assoiations which keep us tied down to domesticity and be free to assoiate ourselves with the higher interests of life. We should begin with he family but not end with it. The quintessence of the institution f *Vanaprastha* is that a man should think that his wife is not the vhole world for him, the woman should think that her husband and hildren are not all that she has to live for, and that both of them hould expand their selves and identify themselves with the other iving beings of God's creation. The most dominating spirit underying the *Vanaprastha* is to be able to live as an individual but not o rest content to be confined to one's narrow self, to live in the family but not to be chained to it, to associate with the group but not to regard other groups as aliens, to love one's nation and coun-

try but not to nurse hatred and animosity towards other nations and countries, to move continuously from selfishness towards selflessness, to grow out of narrowness and expand one's self to envelop the selves of all living creatures. It is only in this way that the universal brotherhood of man can be established on earth.

Family, Group, Society, Nation, Country—All are Manifestations of Ahankara or the Ego

After the family, which is the manifestation of the ego and at a certain stage becomes an impediment in the expansion of the *Atmic* principle comes the group. This is the next stage in which the manifestation of *Ahankara* blocks the progress of *Atmic* expression and drags the individual into its quagmire; and unless a concerted effort is made to get out of it, the mire gradually starts enveloping the individual. The one who breaks off the narrow circle of the family and enters into the larger circle of the group to serve it embarks upon a life spiritual or a life demarcated for self-expansion. But if the group imprisons the individual within its limits and does not allow him to freely follow the path of continuous enlargement of the self, it also becomes an impediment. We enter a group to serve a larger humanity but if we cannot outgrow our narrow group interests, we tend to clash with other groups and the whole purpose of a gradual enlargement of the self is defeated.

Life is a continuous process of conflict between *Prakriti* and *Purusha*, *Ahankara* and *Atma tattva*; each of them tries to get the better of the other. When the family or the group we belong to is involved in the concepts of I-ness or my-ness, when the bells of the family or the group ring with the dominating note of 'I', then it is that the bells have issued the warning knell of clashes with the other families or groups, because all that comes into the fold of 'I' and 'my' is in conformity with *Ahankara* but is confounded with *Atma tattva*. Instead of regarding the family and the group as manifestations of the ego, they are treated as identical with *Atma tattva*. It is due to this confusion between *Ahankara* and *Atma tattva* that the qualities of *Ahankara* are mixed up with those of *Atma tattva*. Thus the family as well as the group, instead of serving as vehicles for spiritual advancement, convert themselves into huge boulders that block the path to spiritual realization. True spiritual progress means that we get into the family or the group only to get out of them matured; and then get into, as well as out of, some other social organisation

with the feeling of detachment sharply increasing in progression as we approach and behold the illumined floodgates, through which the sailing vessel of man has to pass some day.

After the family and the group comes the wider field of society. We have discussed that the development of the individual necessitates both the entrance into as well as the exit from family life; and for the same reasons the formation of a group is as compelling as it is to erase its walls of separation to the ground. Society also is another institution organized to help man in self-realization. But if it comes in the way of the spirit and blocks its progress whilst it is climbing the hill to reach into the realm of higher values and draws it back to keep it confined to its earthly bondages, then society, like the family and the group, has also to be marked off with a cross.

It is the ego and its concomitant selfishness which undertakes or results in the formation of the family, the group, and the society. After formation, these units might either be the strongholds of *Atma tattva* or of *Ahankara,* and permit either the guns of *Ahankara* or those of *Atma tattva* to resound from their battlements. If the guns of *Ahankara* start booming, destruction and desolation will be the outcome; but each shot fired from the guns of *Atma tattva* cannot but ensure progress towards spiritual development.

One may learn the lesson of utter selflessness as well as gross selfishness in the school of the family, or the group, or the society. Is there any sacrifice that the husband or the wife will not make for each other? Groups and societies also willingly undergo privations and hardships to maintain their independence. Besides this lesson of selflessness these institutions also inculcate selfishness. There is no dearth of superstitious parents who will practise black magic on other children to save their own from being a prey to the same evil. The different groups clash against one another for some petty interest, and even in society egoism and selfishness hold sway.

Why is this so? When the family, the group, and the society can inspire us with selflessness, why then do they become volcanoes emitting the lava of selfishness? This is so because very often the means are taken for the ends and the ends are altogether forgotten. We need the family, the group, and the society for our spiritual development, but in the course of evolution at some stage we must compulsorily give them up and free ourselves from their entanglements. And this is what the modern generation finds difficult to accept in theory and implement in practice.

We are here on a long, long pilgrimage of *Atmic* evolution. There are rest-houses on the way, but these halting places are only for a temporary sojourn and not for permanent habitation. The purpose of this long journey is to free *Atma tattva* from the tentacles of *Ahankara.* The family, the group, the society teach us both the lessons of selfishness as well as selflessness, but their main object is to guide us on to selflessness through the labyrinths of selfishness. The lesson of selflessness is learnt only after having passed through the vicissitudes of selfishness. There are occasions when we can see clearly that the family, the group, the society are no longer serving their purpose of leading us on from selfishness to selflessness. This is the time when we should discard them from our lives and march on to a higher plane of existence. This is the very core of Vedic teaching.

And now, let us say a word about the nation and the country. The one who is imprisoned in the narrow cells of the family, the group, and the society cannot visualize the wider concepts of the nation and the country. It is only by wading through these narrow streams that one can enter into the ocean of bigger concepts. Only one amongst thousands would forsake his narrow, individual, and family interests to serve his group; and probably one amongst millions would be prepared to give up his narrow group to serve the interests of the nation and the country.

But the nation and the country may also be converted into the symbols of the grossest form of egoism. The *Ahankara* of a nation may so run riot that the world may have an unforgettable demonstration of it. Hitler thought that the Germans were born to rule mankind. Mussolini wished his nation to be the strongest power on earth. Japan believed herself to be the leader of Asia. What did not all these victims of *Ahankara* do to let destruction and death loose upon the innocent people of the earth? What happened in India at the time of partition in 1947? The *Ahankara* of two nations was aroused, rivers of blood flowed, and those who had lived and laughed together, suffered and enjoyed together as common children of the soil, cut one another's throats. Man degraded himself below the level of the beast. Lion does not prey upon lion but man preyed upon man. If the beast could express himself in human language he would speak thus: 'man alone can embark upon such a fight, a fight in which he preys upon his own kind, the beast of the jungle is not so degraded.'

The *Ahankara* of a nation or of a country can ignite these all-consuming flames of egoism and the entire world can be thrown into the cauldron of destruction. The separating walls of I-ness and my-ness risen to the skies, setting nations against nations, countries against countries, have to be demolished before man can be drawn towards the noble idea of uniting the nations and the knitting together of the different countries into one world. And out of the debris new arches of universal brotherhood should be constructed from which crisp multi-coloured banners may wave and flutter noisily in the wind bearing the memorable words uttered by St. Francis of Assisi: 'Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.'

The Aim of Vedic Culture is to Replace I-ness by Universal Brotherhood

The ideas of my nation, my country, block the way to human progress, both material as well as spiritual. And just as the narrow concepts of my family, my group, my society, create hostile feelings against other corresponding units, so also the ideas of my nation and my country generate a feeling of hostility against other countries and other nations. It is no doubt true that for self-preservation an attachment to as well as an identification with one's nation and country is absolutely necessary. A talk of universal brotherhood in a world overshadowed by the dark forces of *Ahankara* will always remain a dream or a mirage. And to let the world be at the mercy of these forces is to allow the reins of the chariot of destiny to be held by man-eaters or the lions and leopards of *Ahankara*. But the goal of universal brotherhood is still there waiting for humanity to reach it; and though it cannot be attained in the twinkling of an eye, it can be realized through each star of selfishness that sets and the outshining star of selflessness that rises in its place.

Vedic culture gives the message of universal brotherhood to humanity at large, but at the same time it also lays emphasis on the cultivation of a feeling of attachment to one's nation and country. For in its scheme of 'Attachment-Renunciation' the nation and the country are unavoidable stages which have to be passed through in our onward march towards the ideals of one nation and one world. Every step that we take leads us on from the smaller to the greater,

and each stage that we reach is not the goal in itself but only a means to an end. And this end, which we strive for and which may be a dream for the present, is to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth itself wherein every living being will be as near and dear to us as our own kith and kin.[1] The ideal set before itself by Vedic culture is: let *Ahankara* be subdued, let *Atma tattva* prevail. Thus alone can the ills of mankind be remedied.

The world needs rethinking. Nations saturated with an egoistic sense of aggrandisement have regarded themselves as the chosen ones of God. There was a time when the Jews thought so, but they were relegated to the dustbin of time. Muslims upheld that they were entrusted with a mission by the Divine to lead aright the misguided world, but history has on record that it was they themselves who were the misguided ones. The *Ahankara* of nations and countries gave rise to the notions of being the chosen ones of God and this resulted in their standing up one against the other. The message of Vedic culture is the message for the obliteration of *Ahankara*, the message of levelling down the separating walls of division, disunity, and disharmony, and of establishing the bonds of love, unity, and universal brotherhood. The coils of *Ahankara* unwind themselves into heterogeneity, but the roots of *Atma tattva* sprout into homogeneity. The revival of Vedic culture is an attempt to usher in an era when there will be no differences of castes or creeds, no disparities between the rich and the poor, no problems of the East or the West. In this era the walls dividing communities, nations, and countries will crumble into dust and open before our eyes a magnificent vista in which there will be one nation, one country, one humanity; all nations, all countries, all human beings merging themselves into a Great Oneness.

All the great men of the world have been pining for such an era. Alexander the great could not bear the sight of the world split into pieces. He took up the sword and started on the adventure of establishing world unity under his kingdom. Let the world be one, it mattered not if it was under his sovereignty. The Muslims of the Arab countries went on Jehad because they were intolerant of the separating walls of division. Germany dragged every nation into war, on two occasions, in its attempt to make mankind one

[1] मित्रस्य चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षे मित्रस्य चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे।
(यजुर्वेद, ३६–१८)

through the use of the strength of its brutal force. All these experiments at oneness point to the conclusion that unity, harmony, and oneness cannot be ushered in by relying on *Ahankara,* on I-ness and my-ness. The unity based on the fear of the atom bomb cannot last long. The League of Nations was founded after the devastation of the war of 1914 but it has disappeared. The United Nations' Organisation was established after the World War of 1939 but even here it is the egoism of nations that does not let the nations unite.

Ahankara (ego) is an attribute of *Prakriti* (matter) not of *Atma* (spirit); and so long as *Ahankara* dominates, *Prakriti* will not let *Atma* come into its own. Love, unity, comradeship, brotherhood are the attributes of *Atma,* and if we wish that they should filter down through the very sieve of our being, we can do so only by sacrificing *Ahankara* at the altar of *Atma tattva.* The countries which attempt to round off their differences across the conference table remain in their heart of hearts miles apart from one another due to the dominance of *Ahankara.* Humanity has tried and has also been attempting to establish oneness through the brutal force of the police and the army, through the fear of the bayonet, bullets, and the atom bomb. But history has pronounced its verdict that the antidote to the atom bomb is none other than the *Atmic* consciousness and the awakening of the spirit.

An Indian Emperor, Ashoka by name, more than two thousand years ago, launched a scheme of world unification and sent his emissaries of peace, to every nook and corner of the globe, with the message: 'Man has remained till now an enemy of man and has divided mankind into separate castes, creeds, and nations. He has derived nothing from it other than jealousy, hatred, bickering, and distrust which have culminated in struggles and wars. The time is now ripe when we may forget our caste, creed, nation, or country. Let us remember that our country is the whole world and our nation includes all mankind.' Ashoka delivered the message not of the sword but of the milk of human kindness, not of the ego but of the spirit. But even thousands of years before Ashoka the Vedic Aryans had proclaimed: 'Hark ye, all men, children of the Divine, immortal descendents of common heritage, that ye are all one.'[1] India can once again after years of thraldom be the carrier of this message of unity for the spiritual development of mankind.

[1] शृण्वन्तु सर्वे अमृतस्य पुत्राः। (यजुर्वेद, ११–५)

The world is dwindling before our eyes. Through a mastery over the forces of nature, man has become the uncrowned king of creation. The distances which we used to cover in three months are now being spanned within a few hours. Railways, telegraphs, aeroplanes, rockets, radios, television, have overcome the barriers between country and country created by the rivers, the mountains, and the oceans. But has this disappearance of physical barriers brought man any the nearer to his fellow creatures? No, on the contrary the situation has become more explosive because when we could not easily cross the barriers the danger was far away, but now with the distances having disappeared we are constantly near to or actually in the danger zone. We are now situated so close to one another, with each one having a dagger to plunge, a pistol to fire, and all threatening to explode the atom bomb that anyone's fancy is capable of releasing destruction and death upon the universe without a minute's notice. In this state if destruction ensues, the whole world might be reduced to ashes. We were better off with distances in between us. The reason for this worsening situation is that though the outward distances between man and man as well as nation and nation have been removed, yet the inward distances which were non-existent before have crept in and have widened the gulf. The inflated ego would not let men come nearer. Realizing all the evils that the flesh is heir to, solely on account of the domination of the ego, Christ promised: 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,' and 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

But why, one may ask, despite these apparently indomitable forces of *Ahankara,* are the physical distances diminishing? *Ahankara* should enhance every type of distance, be it inward or outward, physical or spiritual. The reason is that though *Ahankara* dominates the world at present, yet ultimately it is *Atma tattva* that will and must come out victorious and overpower the forces of *Ahankara.* The entire trend of evolution is towards this end. But shall we leave this manifestation of the *Atmic* principle to the unconscious processes of natural evolution, or take the whole process into our hands and guide it consciously? If we allow it to work itself out unconsciously it may take millions of years for the *Atmic* principle to manifest itself. But if we guide its workings with a determined effort, the day for self-realization may be hastened and the inward distances between minds may also disappear with the twinkling of an eye.

For centuries we have been raising walls upon walls of separation against our neighbours in the form of different races, different castes, and various creeds. 'One who is not with us is against us' has been our guiding dictum. The ego is constantly clashing against the spirit. Science has levelled down the physical barriers separating nation from nation, and country from country; but she has been impotent in blowing up and blasting to bits the Himalayan rocks that separate the minds of men from one another. All this is so because with science and the materialistic outlook dominating every walk of life the man of today fails to realize Chaucer's ideal : ' All creatures in the world through love exist, And lacking love, lack all that may persist.'

In this hour of pitch darkness the only ray of hope is seen in the voice raised by Vedic culture against the inflationary pressures of *Ahankara* which scatter far and wide its seeds of jealousy, hatred, and discord which germinate in the minds of men and sprout forth and grow into the trees of the different evils that the world has to contend against. Egoism must be subdued and smashed because this is the only way to save humanity from ruin. Unless we turn to *Atma tattva* there is no hope for an early redemption of mankind from the clutches of the forces of evil. The path that has issued forth from out of the densest forests, out of the century old experiences of the saints and sages of India, taking the spiritual principle as its guide is the only true path; all other paths which discard *Atma tattva* will lead us for a time to unity and concord, but must end in disunity and discord because their reliance is on the ego and not on the spiritual principle.

In this context the words of St. Francis of Assisi, uttered in humble prayer, portray before our mind's eye the spiritual yearnings of one who has surrendered his *Ahankara* at the altar of *Atma tattva.* Addressing God he supplicates: 'Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.'

Chapter VIII

THE ASHRAMA SYSTEM

FOUR STAGES IN THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

LET US imagine ourselves to be silent spectators standing at any busy street corner in a city like Bombay or New York and watching the upsurge of men and women, young and old, all struggling to wend their way towards their destinations. If we ask a man to halt and explain the cause of his great hurry, he will neither heed nor halt, but simply proceed further after being amazed at our ignorance of the fact that all this struggle is for naught else but for winning the daily bread. He, together with the rest of the crowd, is not much concerned with the morrow nor perturbed about yesterday, but confines his attention to the stark realities of today which are staring him nakedly in the face. As we continue our stand here, do we not feel the entire air vibrating as it were with the strain: 'Do not fret then unto tomorrow, leave tomorrow to fret unto its own needs; for today, today's troubles are enough. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'?

Now let us shift our scene to a place of religious worship such as a temple, a mosque, a church, a synagogue. Here we behold those who shun the world seated and sermonizing on the ephemeral nature of everything that is material. The only current underlying all their sermons is that the salvation of the soul is more precious than running after loaves and fishes and the problem of tomorrow is the real problem of today. Here the walls echo as it were with the words: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

These, then, are the two extreme outlooks on life. The one lives in the present with a total rejection of the future, the other abides for the future with a complete disregard for the present. Life has been commonly viewed from these two angles all over the globe ever since man began to dwell upon these problems. Among the Greeks, the Epicureans are said to have advocated a fast life, a life in the present, with full enjoyment of every luxury because in their view it was the present alone that mattered. The Stoics, on the other hand, preferred a life of abstention or a life not of the present but of the

future, a life of self-abnegation and renunciation. The first of these two is the path of indulgence, the second is the way to withdrawal. World History is illustrative of people having accepted the one and rejected the other. There have always been either rank materialists who regard the world of matter as the be-all and the end-all of their existence and hence let themselves loose into the stream of its enjoyments, or there have been rank spiritualists who look upon the world as being so filthy and abominable that they cannot but shun it.

The Buddha standing on the pinnacle of spiritual heights gave a càll to the expectant world and thousands upon thousands of people took the begging bowl and turned Bhikkhus. Shankaracharya, the great propounder and exponent of pantheism, proclaimed that the world of matter was an illusion and a myth, and there was no end to the number of men who became mendicants and followed him. Jesus Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount and declared the unworthiness of the worship of Mammon in comparison to that of God, and both the rich and the poor left their callings and went after him.

In striking contrast to the above, there is a host of persons who disbelieve the existence of any world other than this and treat all extra-mundane possibilities as fallacious speculation. It required Herculean efforts on the part of the Buddha, Shankaracharya, and Christ to wean away men from the quagmire of earthly pleasures though they met with unexpected success in their mission, but no effort is needed to treat the world of matter and sense-objects as real and true, for man is by nature a materialist. Hence both these schools have flourished in the course of history, spiritualism as well as materialism, but no conscious effort seems to have ever been made to synthesize both the outlooks except in the cultural thought of the Vedic teachers.

Outlook of Vedic Culture: Synthesis between Materialism and Spiritualism

Vedic culture presents an altogether new outlook on life. This outlook is a synthesis between materialism and spiritualism. Should man lead a life of pursuit and sensual indulgence or should he withdraw himself from sense-objects? Which of the two is more profitable, to make the most of the present pleasures or to undergo trials and tribulations for the life to come? Wherein lies the ultimate peace,

in enjoyment or in renunciation? These and many other questions have been baffling and engaging the attention of thinking minds since man saw the first light of dawn.

The answers given out by Vedic culture to these questions have revealed certain of its inherent characteristics, namely, originality and all-inclusiveness. The world as it exists is a reality, this cannot be denied; it is as real as anything else can be. We can see it, touch it, smell it, hear its voices, and handle its objects. What other data do we need to prove its factual existence? The world is full of beauty, charm, and attraction. Why, then, should we not enjoy it and make the most of its pleasures in the living present? But here the question that presents itself is: do these charms ever remain as they are today? They are existent for a time and thereafter fade away having created a commotion within a few hearts. The underlying reality, the ultimate truth is that this phenomenal world of matter is both real as well as unreal; it is real to the senses so long as they have the capacity to enjoy it, it becomes unreal as and when that strength is no more. It was by keeping this truth in mind that the Vedic Rishis declared: 'Enjoy with a feeling of renunciation.'[1]

This, then, was the pragmatic philosophy of Vedic culture. The world is no doubt real but it is also equally unreal. The charms are there today but they fade away tomorrow. Enjoyment and pleasure always end in disgust and renunciation. The ugly face of the future never fails to peep out of the veil of the present. The beginning and the end are never the same. The culmination of all movement or *Pravritti* is quiescence or *Nivritti*. Not only this, but there is another fact also that has to be borne in mind, and that fact is: all *Pravritti* not only ends in *Nivritti* but is essentially meant only to lead to *Nivritti*, every sensual enjoyment not only terminates in renunciation but is meant to lead to renunciation. However much we may wish to remain in this world of matter it cannot be so. Our stay here is not for good and for ever. We have come and we shall go. We must enjoy because we are here, we should renounce because we shall go. This consciousness of having come into the world to enjoy it is so overwhelmingly powerful that unless it is treated with a corrective in its inception, it may never be brought under control.

[1] तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः। (यजुर्वेद, ४०–६)

Enjoyment is always followed by renunciation, movement by quiescence, *Pravritti* by *Nivritti;* and so it is that we may learn and remember that though the world of matter is real yet it is also unreal. Thus though we have come into the world to enjoy it yet some day we must get out of it, and though the beginning is always with indulgence and enjoyment none the less the end is always with satiety and disgust. But can these feelings of satiety, disgust, and renunciation ensue if one does not plunge into the round of pleasures that the world provides? The feeling of detachment and renunciation follows only when the desires, the longings, and the cravings have had their fulfilment and no trace of them is left behind.

The unfulfilled desires or *Vasanas,* as they are called in Vedic literature, lie dormant in the mind and cause mental imbalance in the individual. It is not only these desires but also their very traces, in the form of dormant urges or *Vasanas,* that have to be uprooted in order to establish peace and harmony in the mind. This unreality coupled with the ephemeral nature of sense-objects can never be fully realized or driven home by means of lectures and sermons; it has to be palpably felt by practical experience. It is only the one who has gone to the very core of these sensual pleasures that knows their evanescence. The very purpose or objective for which we are so irresistibly drawn towards these sense-objects and their attractions is only to indelibly impress upon us the nature of their impermanence by making us see them at close quarters; so that after experiencing their hollowness, when we once withdraw ourselves from them, we may feel as if we were standing upon a mighty rock of mental equilibrium against which wave upon wave of the mighty ocean of temptations may break without disturbing the poise within us.

It was thus that Vedic culture effected a synthesis between materialism and spiritualism, between a life of pursuit and a life of renunciation, between the present and the future, between *Pravritti* and *Nivritti.* It thereby evolved a scheme of life known as 'Enjoyment-Renunciation' in which both the extremes were reconciled. This scheme consisted in dividing life into four stages after taking into consideration both the reality as well as the unreality of the world. What were these four stages?

Brahmacharya Stage: the First Stage

The first of these four stages was called *Brahmacharya.* Life, as we have said, is an admixture of enjoyment and renunciation.

This view of life was embedded in the philosophy of 'Enjoyment-Renunciation' propounded by Vedic culture. But could one enjoy the objects of the world without preparing oneself for them? As enjoyment precedes renunciation, it also follows it. In fact, enjoyment cannot be termed as such until and unless it follows its deprivation. The one who is born with a silver spoon in his mouth seldom stands up to the frowns of fortune. He who has always been fed on milk and honey can scarcely meet the wolf of hunger crying at the door. On the other hand, the individual who has voluntarily lived a life of self-abnegation and hardship is in a position to enjoy even the smallest creature comforts with immense pleasure, joy, and satisfaction. A person who has used a wooden bed will welcome cushions as though they were a bed of roses; he who is used to walking bare-footed tends to regard shoes as a great luxury; the one who has exposed himself to the rigours of the sun and the rains appreciates an umbrella as a great protection. Self-abnegation, hardihood, austerity, that is, certain forms of renunciation must precede the life of sense-enjoyments so that the pleasures of the world may be experienced in all their fulness. Such a life of self-abnegation, self-control, abstinence, austerity, and asceticism was enjoined upon every young man by Vedic teachers and was called the *Brahmacharya* stage in the pilgrimage of life.

As a *Brahmachari,* one lived the life of willing abstention which was meant as a preparation for the next stage of a *Grihastha* or the householder. The young man was kept away from the pleasures of life in his early days only to enable him to enjoy them later in all their fulness. It is only in hunger that one can relish even the coarsest food, and it is only when understanding and moderation develop that the individual is in a position to put a check on every excess. Today our young men are being thrown into the whirlpool of sense-objects without learning how to cross over the river of life. Hence it is that they are either drowned because they have no capacity to swim, or if they learn to swim they tend to do it to excess. In fact, a young man, who is in the very prime of life, finds himself in much too raw a state to be thrown into the midst of sense-objects, and hence is not in a position to enjoy them fully. Deficient in understanding as he is, he tends to go to excess in everything, with the result that by the time he reaches the age of maturity when he should legitimately be enjoying and revelling in the pleasures of life all his zest forsakes him. He finds this life hollow and blank. Chaucer

was right when he said: 'For how might sweetness have been known To him who never tasted bitterness?'

In how many young men do we find the fire of youth burning, or do we not find it extinct just at the very moment when they reach the proper age? Simply to wallow in the luxuries of life is no sign of youth. There should be a zest for living, a joy, a delight, an energy, a dash, or a bubbling up. Our young men in their youth lead such a carefree life, full of abandon and recklessness, that depression overtakes them when they are called upon to face the stern realities of existence. Nature meant the time of youth to be the period of high tide, man has converted it into the decadence of low tide. Is there anything that a man cannot achieve in life by a zest and a dash? Are there not many who dream of climbing to the Himalayan heights of man's destiny, but how can anyone aspire to scale those dizzy heights until and unless he enshrines a Himalayan soul within himself? The young men of today are reared in such a comfortable atmosphere that there is no grit left in them to grapple with the problems of life as and when they are overtaken by them. We are all fully aware of this sorry state of affairs and criticize it also, but mere criticism is not enough. Moreover, criticism always destroys; it is action that builds. Vedic culture had seriously considered this problem that occurs in the life of every young-man and the solution it had worked out was *Brahmacharya*.

A person does not eat without being hungry, and even if one occasionally does, it merely amounts to nibbling or it results in indigestion. Our young men who plunge into the world of sense-enjoyments at a tender age, an age when they should be leading a life of austerity, can be compared to persons who indulge in eating without any justifiable hunger whatsoever. On the other hand, every precaution must be taken to ensure that after a life of restraint one does not tend to be very easy going. It was for this reason that a fairly long period of *Brahmacharya* was prescribed to enable the individual to develop a deep insight into the realities of life. This was the time for austerity and asceticism, for *Tapasya* as it was called, and this gave rise to an outlook in which life was treated with seriousness. The soul takes the human form with a purpose, this rare opportunity is under no circumstances to be lost, the purpose of life must be fulfilled. The sense-objects are no doubt to be enjoyed, but the very object of enjoyment is to eradicate every last trace of

cravings and longings and conflicts so that ultimately one may establish oneself in equipoise and mental peace.

It is due to the fact of our not having developed this outlook that we are afflicted by a sensual hunger which is never satisfied and a thirst for worldly enjoyments which is never quenched. The nature of our enjoyments of the worldly objects can be compared to people who eat and drink in the absence of hunger and thirst, and when they are hungry and thirsty they over-eat and over-drink. The very purpose of eating and drinking is to satisfy hunger and thirst, but do we not all experience that our hunger as well as our thirst for the objects of the world tend never to be satisfied? It was essentially by keeping in view the fact of no unalloyed enjoyment being possible without prior preparation through self-control and restraint, as well as the danger of excess linked with the total abandonment to sense-objects, that Vedic culture had tried to develop a saner outlook on life through the institution of *Brahmacharya*; whereby one embodied in one's own self the pragmatic philosophy of no enjoyment without renunciation and no renunciation without enjoyment.

A *Brahmachari* means a student, but there is a very great difference between the outlook of the *Brahmachari* of Vedic times and that of the student of today. A *Brahmachari* was one whose life was based upon self-control, self-restraint, and austerity or *Tapasya* as it was called. In the Atharva Veda there is a passage known as the Brahmacharya Sookta. It dilates upon the theme of *Brahmacharya*; and in the 26 stanzas that it contains, *Tapas* is mentioned 15 times. 'By *Tapas* does a *Brahmachari* preserve himself; by *Tapas* does he conquer death.'[1]

The educational system prevailing in Vedic times was that of the teachers having their *Ashramas* in forests far away from the din and noise of cities where there were no temptations. It was to these *Ashramas* that a *Brahmachari* (student) went for the acquisition of knowledge. Here he passed a cloistered existence to prepare himself for shouldering the responsibilities of the worldly life that was to follow. It is no doubt true that there is no virtue in being good when there is nothing to be wicked about; the one who speaks the truth when there is no occasion to tell a lie is not truthful; and the

[1] रक्षति तपसा ब्रह्मचारी। (अथर्व, ११–५–८)
ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा देवा मृत्युमुपाघ्नत। (अथर्व, ११–५–१४)

one who is not immoral merely because there is no opportunity to be so, cannot be said to be moral. But at the same time, it is also true that to leave an immature and undisciplined mind in the midst of temptations is not the way to build up morality. One must live in a morally clean and healthy environment in order to be able to build up one's character.

It was thus that a child of the Vedic age did not commence life in the midst of worldly temptations. He was weaned away even from the parents whose way of life was different from the one that was intended for him. He was also removed from the environs of the city where one meets with temptations at every step. His abode was to be in the forest where the teacher lived in moral solitude in his *Ashrama*. These *Ashramas* were known as *Gurukulas*. It was here that he was stationed to acquire knowledge as well as lead a life of self-control, self-restraint, and austerity far away from the temptations of the world. The Veda whilst describing the physical appearance of a *Brahmachari* states: 'Look at him emaciated and unshaven with long hair flowing down his shoulders. He has not used even oil for his head.'[1] Shakespeare's dictum: 'Sweet are the uses of adversity,' would go a long way in enabling us to understand the true significance of this life of austerity which a young student was expected to lead in the Vedic times. It made him realize, at a very tender age, that life is most certainly not all a tempest nor a mid-summer night's dream. This *Ashrama* was given its due importance because Vedic culture considered the child as being 'father to the man' just as Wordsworth so correctly stated it centuries later.

It was at the time of the completion of his austerity-oriented education, when he was so well-equipped with a character that whilst continuing in the world he could remain unattached to it and could also conquer every temptation which would assail him, that he was awarded the certificate for the completion of his training and every control and restraint was done away with. He thus returned from the forest *Ashrama* to the home of his parents and the teacher himself, who had imposed the restrictions with regard to the cutting of his hair and shaving, now offered him the mirror, the razor, and the oil. He was henceforth at liberty to enjoy the luxuries of life because

[1] ब्रह्मचार्येति समिधा समिद्धः कार्ष्णं वसानो दीक्षितो दीर्घश्मश्रुः ।
(अथर्व, ११–५–६)

the firm foundation of his character was laid by the previous preparations, and he could now be trusted to meet the temptations as well as the challenges of life he had to face. It is preferable for the individual to undergo hardships in youth and keep the enjoyments for later years through a properly planned scheme, rather than be swayed by the blind forces of nature which invariably bring about the reverse situation for the individual. On the completion of this stage one entered into the second phase in life's pilgrimage known to Vedic culture as the *Grihastha Ashrama.*

Grihastha Stage: the Second Stage

As stated above, the practice of austerity is essential to appreciate the animation of worldly pleasures, withdrawal from the sense-objects before a dive into them is the only correct and pragmatic approach for those who want to enjoy life in its fulness. It was only with this object that the *Brahmacharya* stage was made to precede the *Grihastha* stage or the married life of a householder. It is a widely prevalent but a totally wrong impression that Vedic culture was by far a culture of austerity and asceticism, and those who continue to labour under this misconception do not grasp the true significance of its philosophy. A life of the world of matter and sense-enjoyments was an essential component of Vedic culture. It had full and free scope within it to satisfy the pleasure-seeking instinct of man by allowing him to go into the very core of sense-objects and then to burn out the flame of desires and cravings which smouldered within him.

Vedic culture believed that the soul could not attain its heights of spiritual development without having undergone the experiences of a worldly life to enable it to cast off the *Vasanas* once and for all, and not to continue moving in their labyrinth for all time to come. If it upheld a withdrawal from the world, it also believed in worldly enjoyments; if it built temples for the worship of God it also constructed palaces for luxurious living; if it raised centres for imparting spiritual knowledge in the depth of forests, it also founded towns and cities of pomp and show; if it laid stress on austerity and self-control, it also made provision in its scheme of life for giving full vent to the urges of the flesh. Chaucer echoed the same thought when he said: 'By opposites doth one in wisdom grow'.

Those who dispute with this culture, on the ground that it only concerned itself with the doubtful other world to the total neglect

of this life of certainty, either forget or do not know that Vedic culture fully accepted the reality of this world of matter and sense-objects. Very often condemnation comes from ignorance. India's prosperity, its achievements in the field of science, its vast production of luxury articles for consumption, were known all over the world, despite the often misunderstood or misreported teaching of its philosophers that the world was unreal. Vedic culture had developed a synthetic outlook, an outlook based on realism and one that was neither pure spiritualism nor absolute materialism, but which we may term as material spiritualism. The young men reared in this culture were not only permitted but ordained to lead a married life, a life of the world of matter and sense-objects, and to enjoy it in all its fulness. They were fully capable of enjoying the world because they had passed through austerity and abstention in the previous stage. Moreover, they were permitted as married men to indulge in the pleasures of the senses so that no feeling of suppression could disturb them when they passed on to the third stage in the pilgrimage of life.

The Romans when they feasted and danced at parties used to keep the skull of a dead man in a cupboard grinning at them which was meant to remind them, even in the midst of their revelries, that this would be the ultimate end of all merry-making. When married people in India indulged in physical pleasures, the fact they had to bear in mind was that all enjoyment was meant only to obliterate the craving for and the hankering after further enjoyment. If after this enjoyment a craving still remained, nay, if even a sense of unfulfilment still lurked in the mind, its very purpose was deemed to be lost. The outlook of Vedic thinkers was that the fundamental objective for taking a plunge into the world of matter and sense-objects was only to get out of them, to enjoy only to renounce, and for this purpose full enjoyment was the only way. After all, with the fleeting of time, the physical capacity for enjoyment is bound to diminish. Can a greater calamity befall a man who has lost every physical capacity for enjoyment but whose carnal cravings are still at their height? The very object of married life, that is, the *Grihastha* stage was to come out of the enjoyments unscathed, to enjoy them to their fullest, but to leave them behind with no trace of cravings carried forward. One has no doubt to pass through but one must not be lost in the sense-objects. The ideal of Vedic culture was that even though the physical capacity for enjoying the world of matter and

sense-objects still remained, it was the flame of craving that had to be extinguished by this scheme.

Does not the life that we are leading today stand out in sharp contrast to the above? Not only in the words of Wordsworth, 'the world is too much with us,' but we are also of the world, worldly. We are so much lost in it, that even when incapacitated we still pine for it, crave for it, and in the end even die for it. Today, our world is a world of desires and cravings. Flooded as we are with temptations all around, we cannot resist their allurements; persons crippled and bent down with age go in search of elixirs which may put new life into them for sensual pleasures; men with hair grown grey hunt for hair dyes, women with wrinkles covering their faces apply powders and creams to look young; and in short, the capacity though void, cravings still remain. What is the lesson that such people can impart to the younger generation? One who does not practise cannot offer a precept. Those who themselves are the victims of temptations can show no path of righteousness to others. The one himself sinking in a quagmire cannot extend a helping hand. It was therefore that Vedic culture had planned for a third stage in the pilgrimage of life known as *Vanaprastha Ashrama*.

Vanaprastha Stage: the Third Stage

We are so strongly tethered and attached to the comforts of the householder's life that a shiver runs through the spine at the thought of severing our connections with it. Most of us pass our entire life's span in the *Grihastha* stage alone. The one who coined the word *Ashrama* for the different stages of life most certainly has done yeoman's service to Indian philosophy. *Grihastha* is an *Ashrama*, a stage, a wayside rest-house, a halting place in the long, long journey of life. The Vedic Rishis looked upon life as a great pilgrimage in which there were four stages, namely, *Brahmacharya*, *Grihastha*, *Vanaprastha*, and *Sanyasa*. Each stage was preparatory to the next. After having led a life of austerity and restraint, the individual entered the married state of ease and comfort as a householder, and hence was tempted to continue this existence for life; but Vedic culture treated it as a stage and not as a destination. And just as from the *Brahmacharya* one wended one's way to *Grihastha*, so also it was from *Grihastha* that a person had to pass on to the *Vanaprastha* after severing all the ties which kept him bound with mundane affairs.

Today we have totally lost sight of the spirit underlying this *Ashrama* system. In this system, the school of worldly life prescribed and taught only the methods whereby one could learn to get out of it; every attachment was welcome only as progress towards non-attachment, *Pravritti* was meant to lead to *Nivritti*. But judging from our behaviour today, one would feel that we are here in this world to remain in it for ever. Even insurance speculates on the mortality of life, but we cling to the world as if we were here permanently. We have come and we shall go, but we behave as if we shall never depart. We continue to carry the worries of life even to the very grave. We conduct ourselves in a manner as though we did not understand the philosophy: 'empty handed we came and empty handed we shall go.' In a rest-house, the days of stay are restricted and on ignoring this fact one is warned, but if in spite of warnings one still persistently disregards the rules, one is disgracefully thrown out. Similar is the case with our life on earth.

Vedic culture ordained that after having successfully lived a householder's life when one felt the signs of age appearing and grandchildren were born, one should move on to the *Vanaprastha* stage by detaching oneself from the responsibilities of life. Failing this, like the traveller overstaying in the rest house, one would have to be cast out onto the street. Do we not all experience that a time comes in the life of each one of us when if we ourselves do not voluntarily renounce our burdens and responsibilities and pass them on to our children, they in their turn stand up against us and those who were the nearest as well as the dearest to us behave as would our worst enemies? Can there be any closer relationship than that between father and son, but after the son is married and the daughter-in-law sets foot in the house, does the same affection continue? New interests are created, new situations arise, new challenges confront us. If under these new circumstances the father does not transfer his duties and responsibilities to the son, and the mother does not regard the daughter-in-law as the reigning queen of the house, clashes begin to occur and the seeds of ill-will and animosity are sown. Modern civilization has solved the problem by doing away with the old joint family system, replacing it by the individual and unitary family, but Vedic culture had solved it differently. What was that solution?

According to the Vedic conception every human being who is born labours under three debts, namely, the debt we owe to our

parents for giving us birth which is called *Pitri Rina*, the debt we owe to our teachers for imparting us knowledge which is styled as *Deva Rina*, and the debt we owe to the builders of a healthy social organization which provides us with a favourable environment which is known as *Rishi Rina*. How do we discharge these debts? We discharge the debt we owe to our parents by entering into marriage or *Grihastha* and thus repay the parents by the continuity of their progeny; we discharge the debt we owe to our teachers by renouncing the life of a householder and taking to the life of a *Vanaprastha*, and thus repay the teachers by entering the profession of a teacher ourselves to impart free knowledge to the children of the succeeding generation; and we discharge the debt we owe to the builders of human society by becoming citizens of the world at large when we enter the *Sanyasa* stage of life.

Thus it was that instead of replacing the joint family by the individual family, as has been done by modern civilization, Vedic culture had instituted the *Vanaprastha* stage. According to this, a householder voluntarily passed on the responsibilities of the household to his sons and daughters, and he and his wife took abode in a forest hermitage. Here he devoted his time to imparting free knowledge to the children of the neighbourhood, and thus detaching himself from the limitations of his family he widened his circle of relationship to the community at large. Thus *Vanaprastha* of the Vedic days served the purpose of the individual family of today, with the difference that the former was for the service of the community whereas the latter is in the interests of oneself.

It is a basic human instinct to aspire for freedom. When the sons grow up and have their families, the presence of parents living with them operates as a break or a stop-gap in their independent movement; and this results in the growth of ill feelings between those who should, from their very relationship, be on the best of terms. Parents held their dominion over the household in their days, now it is time for an opportunity to be given to the younger generation. But the power to rule and govern is something that cannot be parted from so easily, and very often we prefer to see it snatched away from us by force rather than surrender it graciously. This accounts for the revolt of the son against the father, and the daughter-in-law holding her own against the mother-in-law. Thus this problem of possible temperamental incompatibility between the parents and the younger folk arising on account of their being placed in different

stages of life, has been well met by the replacement of the joint family by the individual family in modern times. It was solved by the Vedic sociologists through the institution of the *Vanaprastha Ashrama*.

The Vedic masters voiced out that if ultimately we have to depart from this world, why should we not set out on that journey right away now, of our own free-will, rather than cling on to this material existence to the very end? They did not advocate that the individual should have no desire for enjoyment. Rather, they said that having passed through the phase of a householder and having had experience of married life, as well as discovered both the short-lived and the fleeting nature of the world of matter and sense-objects, one should learn to withdraw one's self voluntarily from them. Renunciation follows enjoyment, that is the law of nature; sociologically considered this is *Vanaprastha*; psychologically considered, this is the inevitable tendency of the mind. Though *Vanaprastha* literally means setting out for the forest to make one's abode there, yet in reality it signifies a tendency, an attitude. It means that instead of being stuck and tethered to the world and its objects, one should voluntarily renounce them after having had one's full share of enjoyment.

Both enjoyment and renunciation, pursuit and withdrawal, *Pravritti* and *Nivritti*, have their due importance in life. In Vedic literature *Pravritti* is called the *Preya* or the pleasurable path, *Nivritti* is called the *Shreya* or the profitable path; the pleasurable precedes the profitable and the profitable succeeds the pleasurable. This is the law of the mind. Renunciation must follow enjoyment for the cycle to be completed. This psychological law is the spirit underlying *Vanaprastha*. It is this spirit, the spirit of detachment, of renunciation, of withdrawal, of *Vanaprastha*, which is necessary for social progress. We cling on to the petty things of life and create trouble for ourselves as well as for others. If we happen to hold some office, say that of a president or a secretary, we cling on to it so obstinately that only a revolt could unseat us. But would such an upsurge occur if only we knew and appreciated the spirit of the philosophy poured out by the poet Keats who opines that we fall by the course of nature's law and not by the bolts of thundering Jove? Thus we see that there are two alternatives available to us, either, after having enjoyed the office for the specified term we may let the psychological law of voluntary withdrawal operate and step aside, or let the sociological

law of revolt have its sway. This must automatically set into operation wherever and whenever the first law is stubbornly kept at bay.

This is precisely what is happening in the social fabric today. As we cling too much, we fall a prey to over attachment; we do not voluntarily withdraw in time, hence we have to face a revolt, be it a revolt in the family, a revolt in the group, or a social, a religious, or a political revolt. Revolt is nature's remedy to any wilful obstruction to the psychological law of renunciation. In the present day set-up the clinging stoutly to whatsoever we hold in hand, be it family affairs, or property, or office matters, has become an obsession. The Vedic conception of *Vanaprastha*, though literally meaning to wend one's way to the forest, essentially, practically, and in reality meant only to be alive to the psychological law of renunciation.

There was also another word or concept, namely, *Aparigraha* which conveyed the spirit of this mental attitude. *A* means not; *Pari* means from every side; *Graha* means to grasp, to hold. Our present life is one in which we have grasped the world as well as its objects from every side and this is *Parigraha*; but to loosen the hold, to detach, to renounce, to withdraw of our own accord is *Aparigraha*. Does the ripened fruit still cling to the branch? No, it automatically falls to the ground. The same law also holds good in all our social behaviours. The wilful continuance of a situation even when circumstances have changed is the source of every evil. Today, the world is sorely in need of the spirit of *Vanaprastha*, of withdrawal, unclinging, renunciation, detachment. Renunciation is the inevitable and unavoidable law of life; *nolens volens*, we have to renounce the world; if we resist, the forces of nature will conspire to knock us down.

What is the significance of *Vanaprastha*? We have two alternatives facing us when we realise that this earthly career has necessarily to come to an end some day: either we pass on our responsibilities and obligations to the younger generation of our own free-will and accord, or we continue to carry the burden on our shoulders till we are forced to be relieved of them. The one who chooses the latter course must necessarily be regarded as obstinate and stubborn and not by any means a man of wisdom. Those who had instituted this *Vanaprastha* as one of the four stages of life must have realized the inevitability of departure from this world, if not today, then tomorrow, or the day after. If renunciation is unavoidable, then

wherein lies the wisdom of renouncing with the slash, the slap, or the scourge, and not accepting it with a smile? *Vanaprastha* was not a forcible withdrawal from the world, it was a voluntary withdrawal; it was not a running away from one's responsibilities, it was a stepping forward after reaching a certain stage in life; it was neither a virtue of necessity nor a condition of escape, rather, it was a virtue of choice. What a pleasure it would be if a phenomenon which is bound to occur, is brought about with our own will and free choice? Is it ever possible for any one to cling eternally to the world of matter and sense-objects? If not, why should we not do ourselves that which we cannot prevent? This is the significance of *Vanaprastha.*

Vanaprastha Ashramas of the Vedic Period

The social system evolved by Vedic culture demanded that a householder, after attaining the age of fifty, voluntarily retired from the city life of stress and strain. The cities of those times were not so extensive as they are today. The suburban areas of towns and cities were surrounded by thinly scattered trees, where these retired men put up their habitations after they had handed over all their belongings to their legal heirs. The children and the householders lived in towns and cities, the old and the retired lived in the suburban shady forests. Thus the outskirts of the towns and cities were fringed by these hermitages.

The younger generation, who were gathering the experiences of life, used to occasionally visit these old and retired men in their huts to be benefited by their knowledge and experience. If the young were faced with any puzzling problems they would place their difficulties before these elders and solicit their guidance. Otherwise also, as these hermitages were situated in the suburbs, the citizens used to pay a visit to these *Ashramas* for spiritual enlightenment. One could witness in the evening, groups of young men wending their way to these forest dwellings, which was a pleasurable experience by itself because the stroll physically refreshed them and the advice of the saints put new spiritual life into them. Whom should the young man of today, suffering from mental agony and plunged in spiritual darkness, turn to for peace and edification when he sees one and all around him infected with similar maladies? How can the blind lead the blind? The young man of the Vedic period, under similar stress, would betake himself singly to the hermitage of a saint and unburden before him the travails of his

heart. The elder of sixty years or more, who had himself passed through the vicissitudes of life and mental crises of his age, was in a position to know the storms that unhinge the mind of the young; and hence would let this young visitor sit by his side to recount his sorrows and sufferings. Thus the *Ashramas* of these forest dwellers were centres of wisdom radiating the light of spirituality in all directions.

Today the world is submerged in materialism, there is a competitive race for sensual pleasures amongst all of us, the bubbles of shallowness are bursting on life's surface, higher values are disappearing, and corruption, greed, aggrandisement, and violence hold the sway. Who is to meet this challenge? How can those who cling to sensual pleasures as the bee sticks to honey, those who have sunk deep into the quagmire of selfishness and egotism, talk of selflessness and altruism? What a funny spectacle to witness a power drunk, office hungry politician, who will go into hysterics if the seat he occupies perchance slips from under him, assuming the role of a Messiah preaching the gospel of social service and self-abnegation to the populace! The one who had entered the *Vanaprastha* had obviously experienced the world and its objects, had passed through enjoyment, that is, *Pravritti* to reach renunciation or *Nivritti*. Such a man was rightly entitled to extend a helping hand to those who were sinking in the morass of life's despair. The Vedic age was an age of saints and forest-dwellers thoroughly versed in spiritual wisdom, whose *Ashramas* surrounded every town and city of ancient India breathing out an atmosphere of peace and harmony.

The Economics of Vanaprastha

Vedic culture, by instituting the *Vanaprastha* stage, had shaken materialism to its very roots and upheld the spiritual values of life. It had also solved another socio-economic problem. If the number of potential workmen or the unemployed exceeds the number of men engaged in work or the employed, and the former keep on increasing without the latter seeking retirement, the ultimate result would be the total breakdown of the economic system with the terrible plague of unemployment eating its way into the social structure. What is the reason for the problem of unemployment defying all solution today? The reason is that those who retire get re-employed for some other job, and thus block the way for the younger generation to better its prospects.

According to Vedic culture, when economic conditions were not so adverse the age of compulsory retirement, not only for Government servants but also for every person who was a citizen of the state regardless of whether his activity embraced a profession or a service or a business venture, was fifty years. At this age, the older generation had to make the way clear for the younger men to step in. The economic mess that we have created today is due to the fact that those who must earn their bread are unemployed and those who are employed are overdue for retirement. Young men are out of work, not because they can do no work, but because they find 'no vacancy' writ large on every side they turn. Law, medicine, education, business, that is, when every profession is overcrowded, how can the young men step in?

The institution of *Vanaprastha* had solved this problem of unemployment. According to Vedic culture, life was divided into four stages and out of them only one stage could be devoted to money making activities by the individual. This fact, that only the householder could be engaged in the earning of money, does not mean that a worldly life was considered as hateful and against the very canons of this culture. In fact, a person could not enter the *Vanaprastha* stage without having experienced the life of a householder, and every householder was expected to earn; it was only after a certain age that he had to make way for his younger fellowmen. But even amongst the householders, the *Brahmana*, the *Kshatriya*, and the *Shudra* were not avenues for making money; they served society according to their capacities; it was the *Vaishya* alone who devoted himself to the earning of wealth.

Thus we see that neither the *Brahmachari*, nor the *Vanaprastha*, nor the *Sanyasi* took part in this struggle for existence; only a *Grihastha* devoted himself to this task, and even amongst the householders only the *Vaishya* could earn and amass wealth. When it was so ordained that only a handful of people could concern themselves with monetary problems, they could earn sufficiently for themselves and would even be in a position to spare. Hence the dominant note, here also, was that they should hand over their surplus resources for the service and the welfare of the State. The struggle for existence was not so keen because, firstly, these householders constituted only one-fourth of society, and secondly, the *Vaishyas* (the money earning class) constituted only one-fourth of the total number of these householders. Therefore actually it was only one-

sixteenth of the total population that devoted its time to earning activities; and even here we must not forget to exclude the female population, which in turn further lessened the number of those who devoted themselves to monetary professions.

Today each and every individual has converted himself into a money making machine, and even the spiritualists are gauged on as well as awarded their position on the basis of their material wealth and possessions. This competition for the acquisition of wealth in which one and all participate results in the concentration of wealth in a few hands, and a far, far greater number being deprived of even the minimum necessities of life.

The economics of *Vanaprastha* successfully met this challenge of social disorganization. Eminent lawyers, jurists, physicians, teachers, businessmen, as well as all those belonging to average intelligence would take to voluntary retirement after the age of fifty so that new blood could be injected into the veins of these professions. Society was also not deprived of the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of these elders, as from and in their *Ashramas* they were always available for consultation. Thus did the new generation rise with the blessings of the old and this also ensured the aggregated social progress. Those who claim that the retirement of the old and experienced persons would be to the detriment of social interests do not understand the problem in its proper perspective. Assuming that these experienced men stay on in their professions, the question is how long can they do so? Some day or the other they will have to quit. Their experience can be helpful to society only if during their lifetime they pass it on to the younger generation, and unless they cease to make of it a profession and a source of livelihood they will not be interested in passing it on to the others. According to the ancient Indian tradition, the elders of society initiated the younger ones into their worldly experiences; and then devoted the rest of their days in spiritual realization. They upheld that the pilgrimage of life did not end with one's wife and children or with the acquisition of wealth and property, but only with the settling of one's life in peace and harmony with the Divine Supreme.

The Psychology of Vanaprastha or Renunciation

We have already, on several occasions, dealt with the various aspects of desirelessness, renunciation, detachment, which are the fundamental virtues of *Vanaprastha* as well as the basic tenets of

Vedic philosophy. The question that very often puzzles one in this context is whether psychologically such an attitude of mind is possible, or is it only an ideological mirage. If it be true that it is desire that creates civilization, then renunciation and detachment do seem impracticable. Why then should we build on thoughts of no earthly value? It must be admitted that desirelessness, renunciation, detachment, by themselves are not practicable, but their admonition here is in a particular context. What is that context?

The inherent nature of the mind is to seek pleasure. The mind is said to be fickle because it moves from object to object in search of greater and greater pleasures. Whatever satisfaction the objects of the world provide is so small and so limited that the mind is never at rest. The eternal search of the mind is for a pleasure that neither dies nor ever diminishes. It is this satisfaction that is not found without but within, in the innermost being of the soul where lies the reservoir of peace, harmony, and bliss. When the mind in its wanderings turns inwards and dives into the unending rivers of cosmic consciousness which flow within, then its march towards the desires of the world comes to a halt because its intenser yearnings for the attainment of bliss that never fades are fulfilled.

The state of desirelessness, renunciation, detachment from the outer world which now results is the outcome of the fact that the intenser desire for, enjoyment of, and attachment to the inner world of peace, harmony, contentment, and bliss has been fulfilled. One who renounces the world with its enjoyments and enters the state of desirelessness and detachment does so not because he actually renounces enjoyment, not because he actually becomes desireless and unattached; but because he is in spiritual communion and thereby derives greater enjoyment, greater pleasure, and greater bliss. His desire for union with the Supreme becomes intenser and finds fulfilment, and this attachment to the inner consciousness transports him to a plane of happiness never known before. It is at this stage that desirelessness for sensual objects is substituted by spiritual desire, renunciation of worldly enjoyments converts itself into transcendental bliss, and detachment in life is replaced by attachment to the life spiritual. In this context Milton's statement: 'The mind is its own place, and in itself Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n' will enable us to widen our horizons and grasp in its true perspective the depth of this philosophy.

When desirelessness, renunciation, and detachment with regard to the world of matter and sense-objects proceed in their sequence or are replaced by the fulfilment of spiritual desire, spiritual joy, and spiritual attachment, which are in every sense superior to the material targets, then alone is one said to be spontaneously desireless, renounced, and detached. If, whilst listening to a dull song the ears catch a soothing melody is not one without any effort distracted from the first and attracted to the second?

And may not one at this point raise the question about the views on self-control. Yes, this is also one of the virtues which is most highly prized by the spiritualists. The query that persists is: if it is freedom that is considered to be the essence of the mind, an incentive to progress, does not control block all evolution and progress? Spiritually speaking, self-control is not the forcible withdrawal of the mind from the world of matter and its objects. In the same manner as the life of the spirit spontaneously results in an existence of desirelessness and detachment, so also the utter freedom of the mind to revel in the super-consciousness of the soul follows in its controlled condition with regard to the enjoyment of the sensual pleasures. It is this that is designated as self-control.

This is the sense and context in which desirelessness, renunciation, detachment, and self-control are not only practicable but also inevitable, spontaneous, effortless, and easy to pursue as and when the soul sets out on the path of spiritual realization as it actually does when it embarks upon a life of *Vanaprastha*. A householder accepted the life of a forest dweller not to move into a vacuum or an existence of negation, but as a positive step to gain much more than what he ever had before. It is in this sense alone that one can say that there was a justification for this life of desirelessness, renunciation, self-control, or of *Vanaprastha*.

The Educational Aspect of Vanaprastha

A life of renunciation was not equivalent to a life of lethargy and inaction. It was a dynamic life in which one switched on the reservoir of consciousness which is the source of all energy. Despite the fact that one entered into *Vanaprastha*, renounced the world and its attachments, yet this did not mean the cessation of one's activities. On the contrary, the individual's engrossments increased and gathered momentum because the restricting barriers of family and group which prevented the outflow of the refreshing springs of brotherhood

were removed. The person settled himself in the neighbourhood of the very people he had lived with for so many years. Instead of serving the family as he had hitherto done, he now served the community as a whole. As a householder he had dealt with his own children and hence knew how they developed mentally. Henceforth, the neighbourhood children would be coming to him and residing with him for education. There was no distinction of caste or creed, of rich or poor. All of them lived like brothers and sisters regarding the teacher as their father. Centuries have gone by, since a Krishna or a Sudama of different stations of life must have received education in some such *Ashrama.*

The students would go round the village for alms and whatever food was collected had to be shared with the teacher. There were occasions when the son of a rich father found himself standing for alms at the door of a poor man and the son of a poor father stood for alms at the door of a rich man, but neither the former nor the latter thought that they were rich or poor. The ladies of the household waited upon these youngsters and gave them alms.

The *Ashramas* where these young neophytes resided with their forest dwelling teachers were known as *Gurukulas.* In the modern world, the idea of a neighbourhood school or an educational establishment in the near vicinity, but isolated from the hurly-burly of the city, is considered to be a novel idea and is also widely advocated. But what else was the *Gurukula,* if not a school separated from and at the same time easy of access from the area of habitation? The teachers were the persons who had renounced the world after having passed through the householder's stage. They drew no salary. They taught the neighbourhood children for the love of teaching as well as doing a service to the community. The students paid no fees. Society looked after the interests of both. The basic idea underlying such a successful working of the educational system was the *Vanaprastha.* We spend crores in implementing the scheme of free and compulsory education, but Vedic culture had solved it through the institution of *Vanaprastha.* Even today, the relics of this system are found in Burma where Buddhism, which had spread from India, continues to be the state religion. It is due to this system of *Ashramas* of the Bhikhus, which still exist in Burma, that the literacy there is 99 per cent. Thus we see that Burma has taken a leaf from the cultural heritage of India by keeping the *Ashrama* system alive which was a great contribution of Vedic culture to the philosophy of life.

Sanyasa Stage: the Fourth and the Final Stage

The fourth stage in the journey of life was *Sanyasa*. The Vedic people were so much enamoured of living in the open air that three-fourths of their lives was spent outdoors. It was only the householder's stage that was lived indoors, the other three stages were passed through outside the city. As most of their life was spent in the expanse of plains and verdant forests, their natural expectation of life was a hundred years.[1] The *Sanyasa* was the last stage in this long, long journey.

There is a misconception prevailing about *Sanyasa*. It is thought that *Sanyasa* means the giving up of all activities. Those who had developed the concept of *Sanyasa* as being the last in a series of stages in the pilgrimage of life never meant it to be so. Life was a continuous progression towards the realization of an ideal in which the *Sanyasa* was only the last stage. Hence, it could not be unlinked from the progressive chain of stages in which it was an essential link or terminus. The spirit underlying the other three stages only found its fulfilment in the fourth. What was this spirit which underlay all the four *Ashramas*?

We have seen that the *Brahmacharya* stage in life was a stage of austerity and self-control. One could not enjoy the pleasures of life without having experienced its rigours. This first stage of life was the stage of preparation for the second in which full freedom was allowed to enjoy the world of matter, so that one could delve deeply into the contents of the sense-objects and experience the exact nature of the gratification that they could offer. What is our experience about sensual gratifications?

The experience is that all gratifications create a reaction, the more we go into them the more we realize their hollowness. Every enjoyment leads to renunciation, all advance leads to retreat, pursuit leads to withdrawal, all *Pravritti* leads to *Nivritti*. This is our experience of the workings of the law of the mind. Vedic culture realizing this psychological truth had planned the four stages of life. As a life of enjoyment and pursuit inevitably led to withdrawal, retreat, and renunciation, Vedic culture utilized these rare qualities, which would otherwise have gone waste, for the task of social service.

A householder forsook the life of the world not only because he felt its pleasures fleeting and impermanent, but also because he found

[1] जीवेम शरदः शतम् (यजुर्वेद, ३६–२४)

a greater fulfilment of self in the life of the spirit. This helped him to loosen the ties that had hitherto compelled him to move in the narrow groove of wife and children. The *Vanaprastha Ashrama* inspired him not to live for himself but for others. It was this spirit of detachment coupled with attachment to higher values of life which motivated him to regard the children of the neighbourhood as his own and to work as their teacher and guide. He came out of his narrow cell to bask in the sunshine of the open, he moved from the smaller to the bigger, from the family to the community. He felt that a stage had come in life when he should be in Goldsmith's words: 'More skill'd to raise the wretched than to rise.'

But even in this stage of *Vanaprastha* he was still moving in a narrow circuit. He had no doubt renounced his limited world and had established relations with a wider circle, but he was still living close to his kith and kin. Occasionally his relatives would visit him, and he also developed an attachment for the people whom he served. But was this consistent with the ideal he had set before himself? He had embarked upon the journey of life to march on from the narrower to the wider, to enlarge his self from the family to the community, and from the community to the world at large. All ties must be broken which kept him in bondage; bondage to the family, bondage to the community, bondage to the country or nation. He must now become a citizen of the world with the ideal uppermost in his mind that all belonged to him and he belonged to all. This was the last stage in the pilgrimage of life and was called *Sanyasa*, a stage in which all ties were broken, every narrow relationship renounced, and a stage of unrestricted freedom for the soul. No better words can be found to describe the heights to which a *Sanyasi's* soul was expected to soar than the following utterances of the Buddha: 'He is indeed worthy of the yellow robe who has vomited all impurities, is well established in morals, and is endowed with inner calm, self-control, and truthfulness.'

A *Sanyasi* was a globe trotter who treated every country as his own, every nation as his own, and roamed about the world belonging to none and yet belonging to all. He clung to nothing in life. He dedicated himself body and soul to the service of humanity at large and rose above the narrow concepts of mine and thine. *Sanyasa* did not mean a clotheless body and shoeless feet, it was the spirit within and not the sign without. It was not a withdrawal from the family and the community, but a withdrawal from all

attachment, love, and hate. A person who took *Sanyasa*, in effect, was dead to his kith and kin. All things must die some day, passing as they do from life into eternity. But a *Sanyasi* enjoyed the bliss of death in life itself, because by renouncing his all he plunged into a world he knew not, nor did anyone know him or anything about him. He changed his name, his mode of vesture, his place of residence, and being thus completely metamorphosed he roamed about from place to place as a citizen of the world giving to humanity his message of universal brotherhood and love. He passed on from individuality to universality, shaking off the handcuffs and chains of egoism and selfishness. Even the clothes he wore were vermilion coloured, reminding one all the time about the flames of fire that consume the body after the soul departs and the time when the truth dawns: 'dust thou art unto dust returnest.' But this does not mean that the *Sanyasi* lived a life of inaction and despair. The fact, the consciousness that the days of his earthly life were now numbered only enthused him with greater zest and energy to ensure that his target of accomplishment might be reached, or even surpassed, in the fleeting moments now available to him.

Service to Humanity and Sanyasa

Sanyasa means renunciation, but renunciation, according to Vedic culture, meant service. Renunciation and service are thus inter-connected. As a child, one begins life with self-service and demands the best of food, the best of clothes, and whatever else the fancy's eye catches, regardless of the fact whether the parents can afford it or not. As one grows older, and especially after marriage, the whole outlook changes. As a parent, the individual willingly undergoes hardships so that his children may remain in comfort. He renounces, only to serve. He denies himself the necessities of life so that his children may not feel the want. When the child is in distress, how often does not the mother pass the night without a wink of sleep trying her best to make the child as comfortable as possible? Married life is a life of renunciation of the parent's comforts in the best interests of the children. The greater the demand for service, the greater the call for renunciation; so much so that for the service of their own offspring the parents are willing to renounce their all.

After having imbibed the lesson of selfless service as a householder, when one entered into *Vanaprastha*, or the stage of life for renuncia-

tion, the urge to serve got accelerated and instead of serving his own family and relations he began to serve the people and the community. As one set out on the path of self-expansion, the link between renunciation-and-service became stronger and stronger. A *Vanaprastha* renounced, but he did so not to sit idle and do nothing, but to expand the area of his selfless service. It was essentially due to the existence of this social institution that the problem of free and compulsory education was so readily solved in the Vedic age. Can a better example be found of a synthesis between renunciation and selfless service to the community? In this institution inactivity was motivated only for activity, detachment for attachment, withdrawal solely for pursuit, *Nivritti* for *Pravritti* of a higher cause.

But even a *Vanaprastha* was serving *his* people and *his* community. This also had to be renounced for the widening of the area of selfless service, that is, service, not confined to one's own people, one's own community, one's own nation, one's own country, but service to the people of the world at large without the limitations of geographical frontiers. And so, a *Vanaprastha* became a *Sanyasi* who now renounced everything that encroached upon any part whatsoever of his freedom and assumed the citizenship of the world. He ceased to think in terms of this country or that country, this nation or that nation; every country and every nation became his very own.

Those who consider the *Sanyasa* to be a stage of idleness or do-nothing-ness know very little about it. A *Sanyasi* has to engage himself in anything else other than indolence or laziness because he is now a citizen of the world and as such his obligations are manifold. A member of the state legislature is expected to have a wider outlook than that of a municipal councillor, a Member of Parliament must think in terms of a still wider interest, but a member of the United Nations Organization should further widen and deepen his perspective because its members are supposed to view every issue from a world embracing angle. We have deliberately used the terms 'must' and 'should' because in practice our expectations have belied us. Vedic culture had not merely projected the idea of 'citizens of the world' onto the screen of life, but had also chalked out a social plan to provide humanity with such men. The aching heart of the modern world needs a band of *Sanyasis* (citizens of the world) who may be fit to hold their membership in the United Nations Organization and urge upon humanity to forget the narrow concepts of regionalism and nationalism and think in terms of one humanity, one nation,

one state, and one world. It is only in this way that our long cherished dream 'to wipe every tear from every eye' can be transformed into a reality some day.

Selflessness and Sanyasa

There are two forces which draw man in opposite directions, viz; selfishness and selflessness. It is often pointed out that the last two stages of life prescribed by Vedic culture were prompted by selfishness because their fundamental theme was that one should apply one's self to the development of one's individual soul. But this is not the correct appraisal of the *Ashrama* system. Those who introduced it clearly visualized a gradual decline in selfishness and a strengthening of selflessness. The four *Ashramas* were also so constituted that at each stage the individual progressively felt that though he belonged to the world, the world did not belong to him.

The first stage or the *Brahmacharya* stage as we have called it, is a stage of selfishness, with which we all commence life. Here one eats, drinks, sleeps, studies, and does everything else merely for his own self. Thus he is in a sense an embodiment of selfishness. But he is not stationed, as it were, in this whirlpool of selfishness for long because he has to move on and enter into the *Grihastha* stream of life in which this world of selfishness starts receding.

A householder begins his first lessons in selflessness as soon as he enters into marriage, and he willingly begins to deny himself the luxuries he can ill afford to provide them for his wife. When children are born, selflessness further widens its circle. Parents readily undergo every hardship for the well-being of their children. As life proceeds for the householder he gradually begins to efface his individual self, tends to forget his likes and dislikes, and thus merges himself into the self of his family. This is selflessness. But the target actually aimed at is still far, far away. Howsoever unselfish the individual might have become, he none the less confines himself to his wife, his children, his kith and kin. The bondage of the self to this narrow groove must be broken, and the soul must fly out unhampered into the still higher realms of selflessness. Hence it was that the third stage of *Vanaprastha* was prescribed in the journey of life.

In this stage the individual completely withdraws himself from the narrow concepts of my family, my children, my relations, and identifies himself with others who were till now not looked upon as

his own. This process of withdrawal from the cocoon of selfishness and movement towards the soaring heights of selflessness found its expression in the householder shifting his place of residence at the time of entering *Vanaprastha*, and thereby establishing his relationship with the people who were as yet nothing but strangers to him.

The culmination of this process came when the same house dweller, after having passed through the stage of a forest inhabitant, became a world resident. Throughout the entire process, the victory was that of selflessness over selfishness because in *Sanyasa* the family, the community, the name, the dress, the local habitation, and in fact everything that was reminiscent of the self being tied down to the narrowness of life was surrendered to the service of mankind at large. Despite the fact that life no doubt began with selfishness, it ended with selflessness when one entered the *Sanyasa* stage. It was a stage when all were in one and one was in all, a stage of utter effacement of the individual self and its total merger into the corporate self of mankind. Thus does Swami Vivekananda say: 'The highest ideal is eternal and entire self-abnegation, where there is no 'I' but all is 'thou'.'

The *Ashrama* system was so constituted that one marshalled along from stage to stage laying aside layer after layer of selfishness; till finally when one entered the fourth stage of *Sanyasa*, all the sheaths that hid the shining light of the soul were cast away and selflessness shone forth in all its resplendent glory. Who was a *Sanyasi*? A *Sanyasi* was one who tended the sick, the lame, the leper, one who shed his tears with those afflicted, one who merged his identity with others. Moreover, what else was a *Sanyasi*, other than the Good Shepherd who was ready to lay down his life to save many a sheep belonging to the human flock ? The Gita also says that a true *Sanyasi* is the highest *Yogi*. Such a *Yogi* according to the Gita enjoys the bliss and suffers the sorrows of every creature. He thus treats the sorrows and sufferings of others as though they were his very own.

The essence of all these four stages of life was a gradual progression from pursuit to withdrawal, from attachment to detachment, from selfishness to selflessness, from *Pravritti* to *Nivritti*, but a withdrawal, a detachment, a selflessness, a *Nivritti*, which led one not into a life of inaction but into the service of mankind. It also enabled the mental triad of knowing, willing, and feeling to expand to its full capacity in the same individual: the *Brahmacharya* stage

enabling the individual to quench his thirst for knowledge; the *Grihastha* stage satisfying his will to procreate and desire to enjoy the manifold bounties of God's beautiful creation; and the *Vanaprastha* coupled with the *Sanyasa* stage catering to his faculty of intense feeling, love, and devotion for his fellow men.

Lastly, it is for the reader to pardon us if we wrought a little havoc in Longfellow's immortal verse by changing the first line thereof from: 'Lives of great men all remind us' into 'Ye Souls of the Vedic Age, your lives on earth do surely all remind us.' The rest of our thought must only be the missile of an echo resounding from the poet. And so with this limited adjustment let us now pay homage unto the souls of the Vedic age with the following epitaph:

Oh! Ye Souls of the Vedic Age, your lives on earth
do surely all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

CHAPTER IX

THE THEORY OF SANSKARAS

THE BUILDING OF A BETTER MAN

THE atmosphere all over the world is laden with plans, five year plans, ten year plans, and a series of further plans. We build roads, dig canals, construct bridges, lay down railway lines, and plan for a hundred and one other things to ensure the material progress and prosperity of man. Our plans aim at a total abolition of unemployment and at providing every conceivable physical amenity and comfort to human beings.

But in all this planning we have never considered that man does not live by bread alone, that he is not the body alone, that besides the body which must be provided with physical amenities and comforts he has the spirit, an entity as patent and real as the body itself. Hence our plans will be incomplete if they do not include a programme for the development of the spirit of man for, in reality, it is not the body but the spirit which is the real man. Where does man as a whole, body and spirit, stand in the mighty plans that we make and execute? Building of roads, digging of canals, construction of bridges, and laying down of railway lines are perfectly justifiable no doubt, but what are we doing for the man, for his spirit, for whose benefit all this material progress is aimed at?

But whilst rightfully enjoying all the boons that science and technology confer on him, will man ever remain as he is, prone to strife, violence, falsehood, aggrandisement, licentiousness, possessiveness? Or shall we frame a plan for making him a better man, that is, a man of peace, non-violence, truthfulness, non-attachment, self-control, and dispossession? Of what avail are the wide roads, the deep canals, the marvellous bridges, the extensive railway lines, if they only serve the aggressive designs of an ambitious dictator who is out to crush the innocent people of the world under his heel? What is happening to the man, the man for whom all this prosperity is being built up day by day with the growth of dazzling pomp and show? Where is the man who possesses the virtues of a real man or a man who can cast away like straw the temptations which assail him in a storm? Have we drawn out any plan for the making of such a man?

We talk of birth control and family planning as if the only problem we face were that of the mouths to be fed. That problem exists, no doubt, but the real problem that humanity today faces is not so much of placing a limitation on those who are to be born as of making better men of those who are already born. Reducing everything to economic terms and affirming that all our ills are due to poverty is a half truth. For is it not a fact that corruption, greed, licentiousness, violence, are greater enemies of mankind than hunger and thirst and are more rampant among those who have got too much of everything, i.e., to eat, to drink, to dress, to live for, and to look forward to? The central idea of Vedic culture was not so much the building of dams and bridges, though these were not neglected, but the building up of a better man for whose benefit all the other plans were undertaken.

But what is it that we are doing today? We are giving birth to a great civilization of science, inventions, and technology. Man has begun flying instead of walking on foot; distances have disappeared; possibilities are in sight of our landing on other planets. But with all these wondrous achievements and smiling prosperity man is himself sowing the very seeds for the wholesale destruction of this grand civilization. We talk of peace but prepare for war, we talk of love but conceal hatred within, we build a magnificent palace only to set fire to it on completion. Is not all this due to the fact that in all our plans we have lost sight of the *Atma tattva* or the spiritual element which is the source of all peace, love, harmony, and contentment? We are busy with innumerable plans but shut our eyes to the one and only plan which is the foundation of all plans, which is the plan of plans, without which everything else is worth nothing.

The System of Sanskaras is the Foundation for the Making of a Better Man

Vedic culture had embarked upon a plan for making man into a better man. What was this plan? We are what we are due to the impressions we receive from our social environment. These impressions which are engraved on the nervous system are called *Sanskaras*. A conscious control coupled with right channelling of these *Sanskaras* was the keynote of this plan. A man is what these *Sanskaras* make of him. And it is only for those who believe in a previous birth and re-birth that the problem of *Sanskaras* is a com-

plicated process: for *Sanskaras*, irrespective of whether they be good or bad, are acquired by the soul in every birth, that is, past, present, and future. Previous life, this life, the next life, in all, these lives *Sanskaras* are accumulated which in their totality make up the personality of the individual.

According to Vedic culture, this life, in which we are conscious of our existence, is the most appropriate time when we are free to give a turn to our being in any manner we desire. The past life is beyond us, the future life is yet unknown. The present life is within our reach, and all the efforts which are possible to effect a change in ourselves can and should be undertaken in this and this life only. A radical change of personality and character can be brought about by a conscious control of *Sanskaras* in this life. The body is the cage in which the soul is imprisoned. And as an utensil can be rubbed and cleaned whilst holding it firmly with the hand, even so are the impure *Sanskaras* of the soul capable of being eradicated, if a positive effort is made to do so, whilst it is in its present physical tenement. The impure *Sanskaras* accumulated by the soul can be completely wiped out whilst it is caged in the present body, and an altogether new turn could be given to the individual personality through the imposition of pure *Sanskaras*.

Vedic culture attempted to give a touch of new *Sanskaras* to the soul from the very moment that a being was conceived in the mother's womb, and this process continued throughout life from the cradle to the grave. Thus the soul throughout its earthly journey was so conditioned by a chain of *Sanskaras* that the course of its development was practically pre-determined. A man is said to be a sum total of the variegated impressions he receives from society. His personality and character can be channelled into the right direction by a controlled supervision of impressions, thus giving the individual the much aspired ideals which become a part and parcel of his very being. If, on the other hand, this environmental factor is not properly attended to and the individual is left to the vagaries of social influences, personal aberrations will and do take place to the detriment of both the individual as well as the society. According to the tenets of Vedic culture, the present life is one of the links in the chain of a series of lives, namely, past, present, and future; and every birth of the soul in the human form is an occasion given to it to unfold its spiritual beauty by an incessant hammering of *Sanskaras* on *Atma tattva*. But as the conscious control of environ-

ment is possible in this life only, a greater significance is attached to the *Sanskaras* of the present life.

The problem of *Sanskaras* assumes a complicated nature when the existence of several lives is brought within the scope of its investigation. But even here we can, for the sake of practicability, confine ourselves to those of the present life, because it is only through the present that one can modify the past and penetrate into the future. But for those who do not believe in several births and for whom the present life is the only one we lead, the problem stands very much simplified. According to them, a man is what he is as the result of the forces of heredity and environment. The parents transmit their physical and mental traits through genes to the offspring, and the social atmosphere contributes its shares towards the formation of the personality and character of the individual. Thus the materialists and the 'one life' protagonists do away with the question of unknown *Sanskaras* of the previous or future lives. Yet it is but ironically unfortunate that though the problem of the making of a better man is so much simpler for these 'one life' flag holders, no conscious and organised attempt is ever made for the control of *Sanskaras* which are responsible for the formation of a man's personality. We conduct experiments on rats and rabbits, we try to improve the breed of horses and bulls, but what are we doing to better the race of men, who are as combatant, as greedy, as jealous, today as they were at the dawn of creation?

A ray of hope in this regard seems to have dawned by the researches conducted in molecular biology. The reference is to Holley, Nirenberg, and Dr. Hargovind Khorana, the three geneticists who have been awarded the Nobel Prize for physiology and medicine for 1968 for explaining how the genetic code is used by the cell in synthesising protein. This may open up an era after two or three decades to correct genetic defects by synthesising proteins artificially to eradicate all diseases including cancer and thus control the physical defects of life. But in spite of this material victory of science, which will be a great contribution towards the ushering in of an era of the better man, the spiritual problem of overcoming greed, jealousy, violence, and hatred will ever remain a problem unless it is tackled from the point of view of the Vedic seers who initiated the sixteen *Sanskaras*.

Vedic culture had advocated, introduced, and put into execution an organized system for the control of *Sanskaras* which covered the

whole life span of the individual from birth to death. The reason for it to give such prominence to the building up of a better man through *Sanskaras* was because it believed in the existence of the soul which moved from birth to birth carrying with it a load of *Sanskaras*, the unburdening of which was the *sine qua non* for its salvation. The materialistic angle views evil *Sanskaras* as mainly a social problem because, in its light, when a person is dead his *Sanskaras* die with him though they leave their impact on society. But the Vedic seers regarded them as both an individual and a social problem because, if one did not get rid of them in this life, they haunted and followed the soul from birth to birth and life to life as well as vitiated the social fabric. It is not the body which is the ultimate, the ultimate is the spirit; and it is on the spirit that *Sanskaras* have to be heaped or impressed in order to enable it to advance.

Vedic culture considered this spiritual advancement through purified *Sanskaras* to be such an enormous problem that it believed that everything in this life could be reduced to naught if this was not attended to. The sage in the Upanishad had stated: 'If one realised one's real self in this life, all was well and good, but if the knowledge of the self was missed in this life it was a great calamity.'[1] According to them who believed in several births and in the soul carrying the burden of good and evil *Sanskaras* accumulated through innumerable lives, this life, and this life only, was the most appropriate occasion for a change for the better. For it was here that they could be consciously controlled and directed to mould one's personality and character. Such an opportunity should never be allowed to slip by because one does not know when it would arise again. It was for this reason that an opportunity for spiritual betterment missed in this life was treated as a great disaster, to avert which the system of *Sanskaras* was introduced.

In what way can the system of *Sanskaras* contribute towards the cherished ideal of the betterment of humanity? According to Vedic culture, our character and personality are the outcome of three factors, i.e., our own *Sanskaras* which we accumulate and carry from life to life, those transmitted to us by our parents through the laws of heredity, and those we receive from our social environment. The fatalists believe that our nature is pre-determined, and hence, neither an effort on the part of the parents nor a modification in

[1] इह चेदवेदीत् अथ सत्यमस्ति न चेदवेदीत् महती विनष्टिः। (कठ, २–५)

social environment can bring about a radical change in the basic nature of an individual. Any goodness or evil in us is attributed to our very nature which is supposed to have been brought here from our previous life. This fact, they say, is substantiated by the common experience that children born of good and noble parents and nurtured in healthy environment turn out villains and scoundrels, whilst those born of demons in human shape and living in unfavourable circumstances shape themselves to be pure and pious.

But Vedic culture is not fatalistic. It believes that whatever nature we bring from previous births, which the fatalists call pre-determined, was in the process of making, in the process of formation. For if it was never in the process of making, or in the process of formation, how could it be said to have been made or formed? The very fact that it is so shaped proves that there must have been a time when it was not so coursed out. If we bring our nature moulded from previous lives, the question that arises is: when did this nature, which is not formed and determined in this life, shape and crystallize itself? If it was moulded in a previous life, Vedic culture calls for an answer to the question: why can it not be shaped in this life also? We thus see that what is considered to be fate must have been in process of formation at some time, and what is called free-will is none other than the process for the determination of that same fate. Hence we see that fate is the free-will of a previous life, and free-will is the fate of the life to come. And, ultimately, it is our free-will that determines our personality and character which we mistakenly look upon as pre-destined, pre-ordained, or pre-determined.

The postulate of the theory of *Sanskaras*, as propounded by Vedic culture, is that belief in a series of births for the soul does not and cannot bring in fatalism as its logical corollary. And hence destiny or fate cannot come in the way of the betterment of any soul because fate is none other than the free-will of a previous life, and as one could exercise free-will in a previous life one can do it equally well in this life also. And assuming that we do away with the concept of many births and regard this life as the only one we lead, then the question of fate and pre-determination does not arise because we are now free to effect any change in our personality for the better should we wish to do so. Thus, the great handicap of pre-determined personality being eliminated, only the other two factors, namely, heredity and environment remain which materially affect the formation of human personality. It is these which were relied upon

by the theory of *Sanskaras* for ushering in an era of a morally better man.

But here another question arises for those who believe in a series of births: how can the *Sanskaras* of such a short life, as the present, obliterate and wash off the impurities accumulated by the soul in all the numerous lives lived before?

Can Impure Sanskaras of Previous Lives be Washed off by Pure Sanskaras of only this Present Life?

Every human life that we have passed through has left behind its legacy of innumerable complex actions, i.e., good, bad, or indifferent. Every action must fructify into a result. Can the far-reaching effects of these complex actions be undone through the impact of *Sanskaras* of only this one life? The fundamental postulate of the theory of *Sanskaras* is that all accumulated impurities of the soul are washed off by the impact of pure *Sanskaras*. How is this possible when the numberless have to contend against a limited number? The answer to this question can only be found through a proper understanding of the nature of a *Sanskara*.

Sanskara is the impact of a *Karma* or action performed by us, but what do we know about the action and its pattern of behaviour? There are different theories pertaining to the actions performed by us. Some say that there are two heavenly angels who keep a constant watch over each and every individual, and record each and every action performed by him either on the debit or the credit side of his *Karmic* ledger account. Certain Hindus believe this function to be performed by a divine chronicler named Chitragupta who keeps the file of the different accounts pending till the final dispensation. According to accepted Hindu philosophy every *Karma* (action) must bear fruit, and till the result of an action ensues the action or *Karma* remains in suspense biding its time for its fruition.

The Vedic idea in the law of *Karma* is that the world is being governed by the law of cause and effect. There is not a single effect without a cause and no cause without an effect. The phenomenon we call an effect in the present life may form the cause for the life to come, and the one we call a cause may be an effect of a previous life. Thus goes on the incessant chain of causation. These actions and their results are neither recorded anywhere nor do the *Karmas* wait biding their time until the results ensue. The workings of the law of *Karma* are certainly not the same as the placing of different

actions and results side by side and then attempting to pair off each action with its corresponding result. The results of a *Karma* or an action may be twofold, i.e., either there is an immediate or traceable result of an action, or it leaves its impression on the nerve-cells of the brain. Thus are the nerve-cells modified, conserving in themselves the accumulated effects of millions of *Karmas* or actions, which will henceforth react not individually but in their totality. These impresses of different *Karmas* or actions on the nerve-cells, psychologically termed as engram complexes, modifications, or dispositions, are what is meant by *Sanskaras* in Vedic terminology.

These physical impressions, engrams, modifications, dispositions, which are stamped on the nervous system, manifest themselves in the form of our inclinations, aptitudes, characters, and the vocations we take up in life. The results of most of our *Karmas* bear fruits of this nature. They create an aptitude, a frame of mind, a vein, a bent, a disposition, or an outlook. Those who object to the law of *Karma*, on the ground that many actions remain unrequited, forget that the change in nature, disposition, aptitude, is in itself an effect. It is known that the intake of food after assimilation by the blood finds its way to the muscles, nerves, and fibres, and thereafter no mention is made of the specific items of food intake whilst dealing with the physiology of the body. Even so each *Karma* or action, which leaves behind a *Sanskara* or impression on personality, is no longer considered individually but aggregately whilst discussing the psychology of the mind. All foods digested and assimilated constitute the body, all actions fused together account for the fund of *Sanskaras*. Our main concern therefore lies with the *Sanskara* and not the *Karma* which is only a part of the *Sanskara*.

We do not reap the fruit of each and every *Karma* separately. All *Karmas* terminate with the emergence of a *Sanskara* which manifests itself in the form of an interest, a tendency, an aptitude, an inclination, or a disposition of the mind. Good actions either bear immediate good results which can be co-ordinated with each other or they create a *Sanskara*, an impression, on the nerve-cells which helps us to progress in the right direction. Similar is the case with the bad actions. These actions do not remain in suspense, waiting and watching, for their results. The moment a *Sanskara* is formed it means that the result has ensued. The soul does not carry a load of either good or bad *Karmas* from birth to birth and from life to life. It only carries its *Sanskaras*. As a tree of the future lies buried in its

developing seed, so endless *Karmas* of various lives are contained in *Sanskaras* or aptitudes of the soul. In other words, we might say that our present life of actions is an extension of the *Sanskaras* which are carried from previous births, just as the tree is an extension and unfoldment of the seed that contained it.

In the case of a nullity of belief in a past life, with full emphasis on this and this life only, the law of *Karma* operates in exactly the same manner. There will be certain actions which will bear fruit immediately, in which case the relationship between the cause and the effect can be directly established. But there will be certain other seeds of action which may not sprout forth immediately. Thus the law of causation may seem to operate in some cases and in others it may seem to remain suspended. But no, the law is never suspended, and the *Karma* leaves an impression, a *Sanskara*, on the nerve-cells which modify the personality and character of the individual, and thus materially affect one's way of life and social behaviour.

The sum and substance of the theory of *Sanskaras* is that we are not concerned with each and every action separately, nor can a particular action be logically traced to a particular result. All our attention should be concentrated on the *Sanskara*, and *Sanskara* alone, the bundle of impressions on the nerve-cells which has changed our personality and made us suffer or enjoy according to the interests, aptitudes, inclinations, and temperaments created by it. All *Karmas* end in the terminus of the *Sanskara* and thereafter our real problem becomes not that of *Karmas* but of the *Sanskaras*.

Where do these *Sanskaras*, repositories of *Karmas*, reside? According to modern psychology, they reside in the nerve-cells in the form of modifications and dispositions; according to Vedic seers they reside in *Karana sharira* (causal body) or *Sukshma sharira* (subtle body) of the soul. The halting ground of various *Karmas* are the *Sanskaras*, and the abode of the *Sanskaras* is the causal or subtle body.

One may therefore ask: what is this causal or subtle body? The causal body is an ethereal body of the soul, subtler than the nervous system, which was, is, and will ever remain with the soul, with all the *Sanskaras* or impressions contained in it. As the psychologists trace all temperamental modifications to engram-complexes in the nerve-cells, so also Vedic teachers assign all personality changes to the causes incipient in the causal body. It is called the causal body

because it contains in itself the seed of all the unfoldment that will take place after the soul takes birth.

It is a proposition and a claim of Vedic culture, a proposition and a claim of great eugenic value, that this causal body, which contains all the *Sanskaras* as the seed contains the tree to be, is most prone to influences. Not only can new *Sanskaras* be impressed upon the causal body after the soul has taken birth but even before birth: when the soul with its causal body is in the womb of the mother waiting to see the light of day, the *Sanskaras* can be impressed upon it to give a turn to its personality and character for better or for worse. The impress of healthy and wholesome *Sanskaras* on the causal body, thus changing the man for the better, is the secret keynote of the science of *Sanskaras*. Life is an unfoldment of whatever *Sanskaras,* old or new, are germinally contained in the causal body. One can change the old *Sanskaras* by formation of new ones.

When the *Sanskaras* are changed the question of multifarious *Karmas,* each struggling for its fruition, automatically disappears; for the moment *Sanskaras* are formed *Karmas* lose their separate and individual existence. All the compressed *Karmas* become the *Sanskaras*. Do we water every branch and leaf of the tree to reach its fibres? The root is watered and the nourishment travels upto the farthermost leaves. Even so by taking hold of the *Sanskaras* we effect a total change without contending against each and every *Karma* which is an impossibility. It was in this way that the complicated question of individual actions and their results was solved by Vedic culture by propounding the theory of making a better man or human reconstruction.

How Old Sanskaras Can be Changed by the Conscious Formation of New Ones

When a soul enters the body it brings with it innumerable *Sanskaras* of previous births. These *Sanskaras* form the soul's causal or subtle body and hence account for its present physical nature and mental capacity. Unless a controlled and systematic effort is made to channelize their workings in the causal body, the *Sanskaras* stored in it will manifest themselves in the man-to-be just as they are in their original form. If the evil is to be nipped in the bud, the undesirable *Sanskaras* must be attacked in their very citadel or the causal body which gradually unfolds itself by making of us what we are at present. How is this possible?

The Vedic seers said that this was possible by the dynamic thought of the parents who are responsible for inviting a new soul into the earthly life. How does a new soul commence its life's journey? It gets caught in the labyrinth of life through the meeting or conjugation of a sperm of the father and the ovum of the mother and this union is the foundation of a new life. According to the Vedic conception, this union of the sperm and the ovum draws to itself the causal body of the soul which contains in itself all the *Sanskaras* which will later manifest themselves in life. If at the time when a new soul is invited, that is, at the time of conception, the parents work themselves up to a high pitch of noble thought, the spiritual principle of like attracts like will start operating. Thus their sperm and ovum will draw to themselves the causal body of a soul which will be in conformity with their aspirations or whose *Sanskaras* will get metamorphosed through their contact.

Vedic culture believed that *Sanskaras* can be transformed by a powerful thought. Evolutionists believe in physical mutations. If physical mutation which totally contravenes the law of heredity is possible, is not a psychic mutation in which all the evil *Sanskaras* of previous births are wiped out by a vigorous dynamic thought of the parents fully justifiable? Vedic culture upheld such a possibility. It contended that just as radical changes can be effected in the composition of the seed so that a better tree might find its roots into the ground, similarly through the instrumentality of the correct potent thoughts of the parents desired changes can be brought about in the causal body or *Sanskaras* of the incarnating spirit. The child is bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of its mother. It develops within her for nine months, and every moment she is, as it were, passing on the very essence of her being to it. The analogy between the mother and the child is similar to that of the weaver and the fabric that is being woven. Is not the weaver with the help of the loom or the textile machine capable of turning out cloth with the designs or patterns of his choice woven into it? Similarly, the mother can scorch the old unwanted *Sanskaras* with the underlying vigour of thought currents and bring into the world a new and better personality.

It was for this reason that the same culture which was encircled on all sides with the inexorable law of *Karma* asserted that it was possible to dis-enmesh the soul from the entanglements of *Karmas* through the impact of new *Sanskaras* and to give birth to a better race of men. If this culture had considered the walls of *Karma*

impregnable, and that each *Karma* must bear fruit separately or bide its time for fruition, would it have given birth to a system of *Sanskaras*, the very object of which was to undo all possible ill effects of *Karmas*, past or present? *Sanskaras* are the cauldrons in which all *Karmas* are smelted and reduced to a common mass. Thus we see that the *Karmas* and the *Sanskaras* are only the two different ways in which one must reap the fruits of one's acts, the one, individually, and the other, aggregately.

These existing *Sanskaras*, which are the quintessence of *Karmas* of previous births, can be changed for the better by the impact of new *Sanskaras*. Parents who have formed their own *Sanskaras*, having passed through the process of actions and their results, as a consequence have developed tendencies, aptitudes, inclinations, interests, temperament, personality, and character of their own. Vedic culture demanded of the parents to cultivate so much vigour in their personality and character as to leave an indelible impress of them on the formation of the personality and character of the child, while it is developing within the mother and also after its birth. One can and very often does effect a change in the interests, aptitudes, personality, and character of others by or through one's own. We can thus transform another person's *Sanskaras* by our own. This was the basic ideology of those who introduced the system of *Sanskaras* in the Indian scheme of life for the making of a better man.

We have entered into all this lengthy discussion because the Vedic thought rests upon the assumption of the theories of reincarnation and a series of births in which the soul carries the dagger of its own *Karmas* in his bosom. It is only in such a philosophy that the question of each *Karma* necessarily bearing its own fruit arises. And since to all intents and purposes it is not possible to trace each *Karma* to its final results, the doctrine of *Sanskaras* had to be introduced which as we have said is nothing else but the quintessence of *Karmas* of the various lives.

The problem of the making of a better man is so much simplified for those who do not accept and heed the theories of reincarnation, but regard this life as the first and the very last. The whole analysis will merely concern itself with the factors of heredity and environment. The children will be what they inherit from their parents coupled with their own acquirements from the social environment. Is it not a shame that, in spite of all this, these are the very people who pay

the least attention to this problem and adopt the attitude of 'eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die'? How can the world stand up and meet the challenges of the times with such an attitude emanating both from the masses as well as the classes sunk deeply in pleasures and degradation?

But since Vedic culture believed in innumerable lives and the accumulated *Karmas* of all of them, the problem of freeing the soul from their entanglements and to make it into something better by the time its earthly journey ends assumed gigantic proportions. The doctrine of *Karma* was such a great stumbling block to its philosophy that no human or spiritual progress was possible as long as the unrequited *Karmas* stood in the way. It was essentially to meet this difficulty that the Vedic people hit upon the system of *Sanskaras*, the very object of which was to face the challenge of the *Karmas* by transforming them in their incipience.

This was a new idea born out of a challenge. It set afoot a system of *Sanskaras* to make better men with the ultimate object of creating a better society. And for a new society a new type of man has to be moulded. Human society at large improves only when each and every individual betters himself. But as every individual had to contend against the impediments of past *Karmas*, his progress and the progress of society in general was being held up. In order to create a new social order, a new man with a new plan had to be resurrected from out of the very cinders of *Karma*. While raising an edifice, a plan is drawn up by the architect much in advance. Every brick and stone has then to be laid in accordance with the plan. In the same way, the character of the individual has to be built by drawing up a plan and following it to the minutest detail. The cherished dream of those who instituted the system of *Sanskaras* for the making of a better man was world re-organisation, by first spiritually rehabilitating the individual man through a properly laid out plan which was then carried out not only to the letter but also in its very spirit.

Sixteen Sanskaras

Vedic culture laid down the system of sixteen *Sanskaras* in its endeavour to change the individual man completely, and to make him into a new man free from the encumbrances of old shackles resulting from the *Karmas* of previous births. The operation of some of these *Sanskaras* commenced even before the soul took its

birth in the physical world. These *Sanskaras* took the form of religious ceremonies. Some of these ceremonies, called *Sanskaras*, were performed before the birth of the child, certain others after its birth.

Pre-Natal Sanskaras

The pre-natal ceremonies were: *Garbhadhana, Pumsavana,* and *Seemantonnayana.*

The very first of these pre-natal ceremonies was *Garbhadhana*, or the ceremony of conception, or for the union of the sperm and the ovum. Vedic culture did not regard the main function of marriage to be only an easy sexual gratification or fulfilment of lustful desires. It considered the coming together of the husband and wife as a sacred *Yajnya*, that is, an act of sacrifice for the invocation of a new soul. The purpose of life could only be said to have been amply fulfilled if at the time of departing from the world we left behind a better generation to succeed us. The ceremony of conception was performed with this declared objective in view. There is no other culture in the world which has given so much importance to the ceremony of conception as was given to it by Vedic culture.

The second pre-natal ceremony was the *Pumsavana*. In the second or third month, when it was known that the pregnancy had advanced to a suitable stage, this ceremony was performed. The word *Pumsavana* means impregnation. At the time of this ceremony the husband (father-to-be) addressed his wife (mother-to-be) saying: 'Heroic son may be born to thee remaining in thee for ten months.'[1] The whole system was devised with the object of giving a concrete moulding or a definite turn in life to the soul that was to be born. The mother was expected to be full of vigour and noble thoughts which could influence the nervous system and the causal body of the unborn babe. Thus the *Pumsavana* ceremony was performed when the physical self of the child was developing in the womb.

When the time was near for the growth of the psychic self of the child to commence, the *Seemantonnayana* ceremony was performed. Here the hair of the mother was dressed and combed, and she was asked to take particular care of her head which was looked upon as symbolic of her anxiety for a healthy psychic development of the child. After placing before her a cup of ghee, the father-to-be had

[1] आ वीरो जायताम् पुत्रस्ते दशमास्यः। (अथर्व, ३–२३–२)

to ask: 'What dost thou behold in this cup?' and the mother-to-be had to reply: 'I behold the child.'[1]

All these ceremonies signified that the mother-to-be set her heart and soul upon the child and thought of nothing else day and night. She was fully aware that this was the most appropriate time when she could give any shape she desired to the child by constantly dwelling upon its thought and image. She spent this entire period of nine to ten months with the sole thought of building up the child in conformity to her ideals and aspirations. Whatever child was thus formed in the mother's womb, no power on earth could change in any way. At this time its causal body was cast into the mould of *Sanskaras* of the mother who could shape it to her desired image. The facts, of the soul being tied up with the causal body, the causal body having passed through the genetic influences of the sperm and the ovum, and the new life depending for its existence upon the secretions of every internal organ of the mother, provided the parents with all the necessary instruments to enable them to mould the child to their ideal.

The world does not change for the better because there is no conscious effort on the part of parents to bring into existence better children through the science of *Sanskaras*. When Geetu, the assassin of Garfield, the President of America, was in the womb, his mother tried to destroy him by resorting to abortion. She did not succeed in the attempt but her *Sanskara* made him a murderer. When Napoleon was to be born, his mother used to go to witness the parade of the soldiers. The thrill she used to experience on hearing the martial songs made Napoleon a great soldier. The mother of Prince Bismarck, when the child was in her womb, used to see the marks of the swords of Napoleon's armies disfiguring the gates of her house which kindled a desire in her heart for taking revenge against France. The strength of these desires found expression in her son who took the revenge.

The mechanism of nine months of pregnancy is so designed and the impressions directed towards the child in embryo form are so powerful that *Sanskaras* of previous lives can be made to fade away in their impact. That is why the Vedic teachers who believed in metempsychosis stated that human life was a rare opportunity which if once missed meant the straying into the lives of 8.4 million differ-

[1] किं पश्यसि ? प्रजां पश्यामि। (गोभिल गृ., २–७–३)

ent species of beings. This does not mean, however, that there is such a fixed number of species, it only means that human life should not be wasted. We have obtained it for some specific purpose and the task should be that of bettering the human race. And the task of making a better man lies with the mother, and can start from the very moment the embryo forms in her womb. Her task at this time is similar to that of an architect. She can plan and do what she wills.

The chief object of the three pre-natal ceremonies, namely, *Garbhadhana, Pumsavana,* and *Seemantonnayana* which were performed before the child was born, is to place the mother in such an environment as perforce she may radiate indelible *Sanskaras* for the formation of the personality of the child taking shape within her. The causal body of the unborn which with all the previous *Sanskaras* is in the process of unfoldment within the body of the mother, deriving its nourishment from her very limbs and organs, can be so metamorphosed during the period of gestation that a totally new being can be made of it when and after its mortal eyes see the first light of dawn. If every mother understood this secret of making a better man, not only a new man, but a new race, a new society, and a new world would come into being.

Post-Natal Sanskaras

After the birth of the child, certain post-natal ceremonies were ordained to be performed. As soon as the child was born, with a golden stick the sacred word *AUM* was inscribed on its tongue which signified that the parents had made a resolve to regard it as a gift of God to be dedicated to the service of humanity. In his ears was uttered the word: '*Vedosi*' or 'Thou art the Veda.' Veda means knowledge. Then the Mantras were recited: '*Ashma Bhava*' or 'Be firm like a stone,' and '*Parashur Bhava*' which means 'Be sharp like a trident.' All these acts, though seemingly insignificant and meaningless, were performed by the parents with a view to enable them to be firm in their resolve to build up the personality and character of the child and make him into a better man. All these ceremonies performed on the birth of the child were known as *Jatakarma*.

After *Jatakarma* came the naming ceremony known as *Namakarana*. After birth, the parents became fully conscious of the heavy responsibility that had fallen on their shoulders, and made a firm

resolve to leave no stone unturned in giving a practical shape to their aspirations pertaining to the person of the child. These hopes and ideals had to be embodied in the name that was selected for the child. The naming ceremony was performed either on the eleventh day or a hundred and one days after birth. The chosen name summarized the expectations of the parents. The purpose of giving any particular name was to surround the child with the desired vibrations to which he may consciously or unconsciously respond. If a child named as *Satya Swaroop*, meaning an embodiment of truth, tells a lie, the name itself might put him to shame; if a child named *Prem Sagar*, meaning the ocean of love, starts quarrelling, the name itself might set him right.

After these two ceremonies, in the fourth month *Nishkramana* (the ceremony of taking the child out), in the sixth month *Annaprashana* (the ceremony of giving the child solid food to eat), in the third year *Choodakarma* (the ceremony of cutting the hair), and in the fifth year *Kárnavedha* (the ceremony of perforating the lobes of the ears) were duly performed. The above four ceremonies were prescribed to be performed from the point of view of the child's health, so that the parents may be compelled to take particular care of its physical well-being.

When the child reached the school going age, the *Upanayana* ceremony was performed. *Upa* means near, *Nayana* means to take. The word means to take the child near the preceptor. According to Vedic culture, *Upanayana* was *sine qua non* for any child born in Aryavarta. This ceremony laid stress upon the intimate relationship that must subsist between the teacher and the taught. The child approaching the teacher submitted with due reverence: 'I have come to be initiated into *Brahmacharya*. Please take me near you as your disciple.'[1] We shall explain the significance of the word *Brahmacharya* in a later chapter, but suffice it here to say that it connotes a life of moral rectitude and sexual purity on which the greatest stress was laid by Vedic teachers. And this perhaps may strike the modern educationists as being a novel idea. Sexual purity, moral rectitude, and proximity to the teacher were the three pillars on which rested the educational edifice of ancient India. The child lived day and night in the *Ashrama* of the teacher leading a celibate life and concentrated only on the acquisition of knowledge. The

[1] ब्रह्मचर्यमागाम् उपमानयस्व। (गोभिल, २–१०–२०)

relationship between the teacher and the taught was as close a one as between father and son. The very word *Upanayana*, the initiation ceremony, testifies to this intimate relationship which existed between the two, so much so that in one of the Vedic pronouncements it was declared: 'While initiating, the preceptor like a mother bears the child in the womb.'[1] The duty of the preceptor was to devote himself day and night to the building up of his disciple, and it was his greatest joy and dearest pride if he did make the young boy into a better man for society. Regardless of the system of education we adopt and follow, the close relationship between the teacher and the taught is such a fundamental base that education is worth nothing if it ignores this vital point. And it is essentially this point which is ignored by our modern educational system.

In this context, the word *Gurukula* assumes great significance. *Gurukula* was the name given to a residential school where the students lived with their teachers. *Guru* means the teacher, *kula* means the family. Whilst receiving education the pupil was supposed to be separated from his family, but actually he only moved from the smaller family of the parents to the bigger family of the teacher. Here he received the same love and affection from the inmates of the *Ashrama*, as he would in his own family. It was not a soulless, lifeless atmosphere that he moved in, on the contrary it was an atmosphere in which all the inmates regarded him as their own kith and kin. The two words, namely, *Upanayana* and *Gurukula* speak volumes for the philosophy of education advocated by the Vedic seers. In which system of modern education is this fundamental concept of establishing an intimate relationship between the teacher and the taught not theoretically accepted? But what are the efforts made today to create such a congenial atmosphere?

Besides *Upanayana* there was another ceremony called *Vedarambha*. *Upanayana* meant admission, *Vedarambha* meant commencement of studies. The following inaugural address, by the preceptor, was delivered to the new initiates on the occasion of the commencement of their studies. It shows, through a tiny hole, the shape of the mould into which the personality and character of the future citizen was proposed to be cast by the teacher. While speaking to the gathering of the new entrants, the teacher addressed each one of them thus:

[1] आचार्यं उपनयमानो ब्रह्मचारिणं कृणुते गर्भमन्तः तं रात्रीस्तिस्र उदरे बिभर्ति तं जातं द्रष्टुमभिसंयन्ति देवाः। (अथर्व, ११–५–३)

'You are a *Brahmachari* from today. Remain clean and make full use of water for cleanliness. Don't be lazy, keep yourself always engaged in doing some work. Don't waste time. Don't sleep in the daytime. Study each Veda for 12 years and thus aim at studying upto 48 years. Don't obey the orders of the Acharya if he says something contrary to the injunctions of *Dharma*. Give up anger and falsehood. Don't give yourself up to sex indulgence and other kinds of sense pleasures. Sleep on the hard bed. To sing obscene songs, to play upon musical instruments, and to dance are forbidden for you. Don't resort to excess in anything, in bathing, eating, sleeping, attachment, fear, grief. Get up early in the morning. After easing yourself, cleanse your teeth, take bath, perform *Sandhya*, glorify God, practise concentration, and meditation. Don't shave. Never take meat, wine, and such other forbidden and harmful things. Don't dwell in a city. Don't ride on a horse, an elephant, a camel, or a bullock. Don't use shoes and umbrella. Don't allow your semen to waste, consciously or unconsciously. Preserve it within yourself and utilize it for strengthening brain power. Don't apply fragrant oils on your body. Don't use sour, pungent, astringent, salty, and laxative substances. Be regular in your habits of eating and drinking. Be ever attentive to the acquisition of knowledge. Observe good manners. Don't talk too much. Be civilized and cultured. Use a girdle and a stick. Remain content on the alms you get. Perform *Sandhya* and *Havana*. Work to the pleasure of the preceptor. Making obeisance to him in the morning and in the evening, acquire knowledge and keep a constant watch on your senses. These are your daily duties.'[1]

The quintessence of the educational background of Vedic culture is contained in the above sermon. There is a distinct attempt visible here, on the part of Indian educators, to direct the life course of a young man and to make him into a better man. As contrasted to this, we see the student community of today leading a life of sensual pleasures and self-centredness coupled with total indifference on the part of the teachers to play their role of giving a direction to the life of the student. We cannot help bowing down our heads with reverence before those who, on the very day of the student's admission into their seminary, set those ideals before their pupils which are contained in this sermon. Our young men today are initiated

[1] गोभिलीय गृह्यसूत्र, प्र. २, का १०, सू. ४३.

into good or bad, and often bad habits by their playmates of neighbouring streets and lanes. But in the code of Vedic culture the primary duty of the teacher, besides imparting knowledge contained in the books, was that of developing a strong personality and character in the student, for only thus was his life's ambition of making better men fulfilled. Moreover what else is education if not, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'the manifestation of the perfection already in man.'

These days of acquiring knowledge, spent with a teacher, were the days of austerity for each and every student. He had to lead a hard life and prepare himself to face the realities and challenges of the future. An easy-going and comfortable existence in the very prime of youth ill befits a young man who is still only in the making, and for whom a very long journey along life's meandering highway still remains.

A small digression to enable us to compare the above mentioned *Gurukula* system of education and the ideal system of education envisaged by Plato in *The Republic* would not be out of the present context. Plato is most emphatic in his assertion that the ultimate aim of both physical as well as intellectual education should be the training and building up of character. He opines that on account of its fundamental and crucial importance education must be provided by the State.

The educator's aim, according to Plato, should not be to put into the mind of the pupil the knowledge that was not there before but to turn the mind's eye to the light so that it can see for itself. The faculty by which one learns has been compared to an eye which cannot be turned from darkness to light unless one turns the position of the body. Even so the mind must be turned away from the world of change until its eye stands face to face with and surveys the reality as the ultimate good.

Plato's idea of education was fully corroborated by the concept of education as outlined in Vedic culture. In Sanskrit besides several other words *Vidyarthi* is also a word which means a student. This word is derived from the root *Vid*[1] meaning to exist or think

[1] There are four roots in Sanskrit with the appelation of *Vid* (विद्). They are विद् सत्तायाम् (to exist), विद् ज्ञाने (to know), विद् लाभे (to obtain or find) and विद् चिन्तायाम् (to think). The Vedic conception about knowledge or *Vidya* is that it already exists though it has to be discovered or obtained. Rishi Dayanand in his *Rigvedadi Bhashya Bhoomika* says that *Vidya* is that which exists—विद्यते इति सा विद्या.

or obtain. *Vidyate* which is also derived from the root *Vid* means to exist. *Vidyarthi* therefore means one who approaches his *Guru* with the object of obtaining his help to bring out that which already exists in him in the form of a seed. This unfoldment of the self is known as *Vidya* or knowledge. It is not an imposition on the self but an expression of the self or an outward manifestation of that which is latent within the self.

After the completion of his education, another ceremony was performed whereby the controls and restrictions hitherto imposed were relaxed and removed. This was called *Samavartana* which means graduation or convocation ceremony.

By the time he finished his education, under the direct control and guidance of a teacher, the young man was expected to have developed a personality and a character, and was thus considered fit to assume the responsibilities of a householder's life. The ceremony performed for this purpose was called *Vivaha* or the marriage ceremony. The various stages of this ceremony and the various phases of the householder's life were also indicative of the spiritual background which constituted the life-blood of the young man born in Vedic traditions. The torch to be kept burning in front of one and all was: the ultimate is not the body, the ultimate is the spirit; and it was to this that one and all had to move despite a life of sensual attractions and the material world.

And so, having lived and enjoyed life as a householder for a span of about twenty-five years, a person had to withdraw himself from worldly life and prepare for the life of the spirit. Manu, the Indian law-giver of several centuries B.C. had ordained: 'When a householder sees his hair growing grey and a grandson is born to him he should move from a house to a houseless stage.'[1] This was not only a pious advice but part and parcel of the system of sixteen *Sanskaras*. Hence, a regular ceremony was instituted for this purpose called *Vanaprastha* or the shifting from the city to the forest. The word was itself symbolic of the life of detachment that was to follow.

But even this did not signify the end of the journey. The pilgrimage of life ended with the *Sanyasa* stage, and therefore one last ceremony had to be performed w[illegible]ld serve as a final milestone on the

. गृहस्थस्तु यदा पश्येत्
अपत्यस्यैव चापत्यं ॥

road towards the attainment of the cherished goal of spiritual realization. About this Manu has said: 'Having spent the third part of one's life in forests one should give up all attachment and renouncing everything should move from place to place doing good to humanity.'[1] It was at this ceremony that the *Sanyasi* declared that he had renounced all his desires, the desire to have children, the desire for accumulating wealth, the desire to win honours. It is these desires that set man against man and are at the root of all clashes and conflicts. By these declarations all was set at peace with him and the whole world got transformed as it were into being called his very own. Nobody could be afraid of him nor did he have any cause to fear any one. 'He belonged to all and all belong to him' was the spirit which henceforth inspired him onwards in his march. And thus, did not his heaven commence before the world was past?

Thus contributing his bit towards the good of humanity, a man passed away, and finally his cremation or *Antyeshti* ceremony was performed. It enabled his soul to get liberated from the chain of *Sanskaras*, with which Vedic culture had surrounded it all through its earthly toils and turmoils.

How deep, comprehensive, and serious was the outlook of those who devised a systematic control on the life of each and every individual in society by the institution of the sixteen *Sanskaras* or ceremonies which practically covered the whole field of life. Thirteen of these ceremonies were performed at the times when a man's outlook and doings could be moulded through them. Today we perform only two of these ceremonies, namely, marriage and cremation. Vedic culture looked upon the problems of making a better man so seriously because it treated this life in human form as a great opportunity, and hence took every precaution to ensure that it was not missed. The scheme of initiating sixteen *Sanskaras* was undertaken with a view to giving a concrete shape to its dream of creating a new man and evolving a new social order. Even today, humanity can draw its inspiration from those architects of Aryavarta whose one concern in life was to draw out a plan for the building of a better man, the outlines of which were enshrined in the scheme of *Sanskaras*.

[1] वनेषु विहृत्यैवं तृतीयं भागमायुषः।
चतुर्थमायुषो भागं त्यक्त्वा संगान् परिव्रजेत्॥ (मनु, ६–१)

CHAPTER X

THE THEORY OF VARNA VYAVASTHA

SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

IN THE foregoing chapters we have seen that spiritualism builds and binds, whereas materialism destroys and disintegrates. Spiritualism razes to the ground the barriers which separate man from man, materialism only leaves behind its vistas and edifices of separation. Is not, then, one fully justified in inquiring as to how it could ever be that Vedic culture, whose fundamental postulate is spiritualism, devise a system of social stratification known as the caste system or *Jati Vyavastha* which set man against man in the form of *Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas*, and *Shudras*, and relegated an appreciable section of its own humanity to the heinous lot of untouchability? Is such a system consistent with the spiritual claims of India's culture? Does it not make the inquiring and intelligent mind say to itself: 'Yes, in India, theory and practice must really be poles apart.'?

There can be no two opinions about the devastating effects of the caste system on Indian society. It has been an outrageous social tyranny. It has created an artificial hierarchy of superior and inferior human beings which can be said to have violated every spiritual postulate advocated by this culture. Even the constitutions of materialistically advanced countries guarantee 'equality before the law' to each and every citizen. But is it not clearly apparent that the spiritualistic law of Vedic culture, as reflected by its workings through the caste system, has guaranteed through the centuries naught else but inequality to the members of its own fold? All this is no doubt true, but the fact to be borne in mind is that this was not the perspective with which the Vedic masters viewed the system; or to put it differently and more affirmatively, this was not the system evolved by Vedic culture. Is not history replete with instances of various social, religious, political, and economic institutions which after passing through the heyday of their glory have so degenerated as to be completely irreconcilable with every original concept of them? How else would Tennyson say, 'God fulfils Himself in many ways, Lest one good custom should corrupt the world'?

The caste system, if viewed through the eyes of the present century, can and must only be regarded as that social system which evolved as a result of certain social, religious, economic, and political compulsions of the post-Vedic and medieval periods, and which prevented the Hindu society from disintegration against the onslaughts of the invaders. It was through these rigid disciplinary measures that both Indian society and culture were able to maintain their compactness as well as hold their own against the foreigners. It was a boon so long as it served its purpose but has turned into a bane after having outlived its utility. The original conception of Vedic sociologists based upon spiritual philosophy was called the *Varna* system and not *Jati* or caste system.

Difference between Varna and Jati or Caste

The two words in Sanskrit literature which are often confused with each other, giving rise to misconception regarding the Indian social system, are *Varna* and *Jati*. Both *Varna* and *Jati* are translated as caste by English writers but actually they are poles asunder. Both denote differences in human nature; but whereas *Varna* is spiritual, *Jati* is social; *Varna* is the old Vedic conception, *Jati* is purely a medieval and a post-Vedic idea. When we speak of the *Varna* system of Vedic culture, we do not mean the *Jati* or caste system of the medieval period, based upon birth, which as we have already stated is the bane of Indian society. Thus we see that the term caste refers to *Jati* and not to *Varna*; and it is *Varna* about the spiritual significance of which we are concerned here.

Difference between Caste and Class

Before we proceed further let us also understand the difference between caste and class. *Varna* is spiritual, caste is social, but class is economic. Every progressive society aims at castelessness and classlessness by battling against the social and economic inequalities. The lower steps of the ladder of social evolution bear the footprints of caste struggle, whereas the upper ones tend to be scarred with the marks of class struggle. Gradually class replaces a caste but ultimately a casteless as well as a classless society must emerge from the horizons of evolution.

The problems of caste, though very acute in the earlier stages, either disappear or pale into insignificance in the course of evolutionary development because society tends to be confronted with

the problems of class, that is, opulence and poverty which seize it as a nightmare. The social problem of caste inequality is shelved or swept away by the economic problem of class inequality which emerges and continues to be the main headache or a burning sore for society.

Class Based upon Division of Labour Results in Class Conflict

How does this class inequality, which is the main problem facing society today, come into being? It is common knowledge that man cannot live alone nor can he fulfil all his needs by himself and hence he seeks the help of others. This results in the formation of social groups whose basis is the division of work according to the different capacities of the various individuals. In Economics, this social process is called division of labour or mutual co-operation. The course of economic evolution clearly points out that certain persons are always found to be more efficient than others in the performance of their specific jobs, and consequently demand higher wages for the same labour than that demanded by others. As this demand is just and proper it cannot be resisted or turned down, and this results in the sowing of the seeds of the inequalities of incomes. This inequality of income gives rise to savings and capital formation. Thus society divides itself into two groups, the capitalists and the labourers, that is, those who depend upon their capital and those who depend upon their sweat and toil as the means for their livelihood.

In a world dominated by materialism, rallies tend to be formed for running the race of possession as a logical sequence to or the outcome of capital formation. The law of the division of labour, which operates in human society, is a blind law which not only gives rise to the formation of capital, but also divides society into two groups of the haves and the have-nots and thus brings into existence all its attendant evils. Any society based upon a materialistic outlook is bound to view all its problems only in this twofold perspective of capital and labour, employer and employee, production and distribution, because there are only two classes with their interests respectively vested in the one or the other of these two problems. This means that society has to divert substantial portions of its energies towards the solution of these class conflicts, class wars, and class revolutions.

Varna is a Spiritual Social Process

When social evolution is left to the blind, unconscious forces of

nature, society invariably envelopes itself into the shroud of materialism because, to all intents and purposes, it is matter and material objects with which it has to deal. This unconscious, blind evolution of society creates various problems, such as, the concentration of wealth in a few hands, an unequal distribution of the necessities of life, and also the division of society into the two groups of the rich and the poor. But nature always attempts to strike a balance between its opposite forces, and hence counter movements are generated which tend to level down the economic disparities.

We have described the law of the division of labour as an unconscious, blind social force responsible for the ills of society. It is said to be unconsciously operating because no direct or deliberate effort has been ever made to organise society on the basis of this law. Society, in the absence of any positively directed effort to shape its evolution, automatically falls a prey to the law of the division of labour because this is essential to enable it to proceed on its march. Further, it is not only an unconscious law but it is also a blind law. We have called it a blind law because it takes into account only the material side of man and totally ignores his spiritual aspect. It is founded only upon the rock of the body and its needs, and upholds that all life's labour must be directed only towards the satisfaction of the physical urges. Any society grounded upon the very core of materialism must evolve unconsciously and blindly through the operation of this law. And this results in the creation of the social problems of class consciousness and class conflict.

As against this economic law of the division of labour which operates unconsciously and blindly in our social organisation, Vedic culture had devised the spiritual law of the division of *Varnas* and had also undertaken to operate it consciously and sensibly, and thereby to cast society into a well planned and well patterned mould. This does not mean that Vedic culture had repudiated or ignored the economic principle of the division of labour. This law was accepted and upheld so far as the production and the distribution of material wealth was concerned, but no more and no less. For to the Vedic seers the world in its totality was much more than the world of matter and its objects since it also consisted of the spirit which was ultimately destined to use matter as its subservient. Thus according to them the economic law of the division of labour was only a half truth because it meant a division of only the shell of humanity and not of its substance. Society divided into two classes,

that is, the capitalists and the labourers, might satisfy the material sociologists who work out the social structures on the law of the division of labour. But to the exponents of Vedic culture, this economic aspect of society was only a part of the whole social structure which thus comprised the other persons also who could, without refuting the economic laws, think in terms of spiritual capital, spiritual wealth, and spiritual labour.

The law of the division of labour of modern economists and the law of *Varna* of the Vedic spiritualists can both be placed on equally high pedestals of social evolution. But the difference is that whereas the former divides human beings into economic units the latter divides them into economic-cum-spiritual units. Man is the body, no doubt, but he is much more than the body; he is the body as well as the spirit; and any social philosophy to be comprehensive must take both these aspects into account.

Spiritual Nature of Varna

As already stated, *Varna* is an all-embracing division of society, whereas division of labour is only based on the economic aspect of society. Vedic culture did not ignore the economic aspect, but it was dealt with not by the *Varna* system but by the *Ashrama* system. *Ashrama* in Sanskrit is composed of two words, *A* and *Shrama*; *A* means all-round or intensive, *Shrama* means labour. The four *Ashramas* ordained in Vedic culture, that is, *Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha*, and *Sanyasa* have already been dealt with in a previous chapter. These were four stages of life in which one kind of labour or the other dominated. Similar to the four *Ashramas*, the *Varnas* were also four in number, comprising of *Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya*, and *Shudra*. Each *Varna*, excepting *Shudra*, was supposed to pass through all the four *Ashramas*, or the different types of labour, which were considered to be necessary for the attainment of the goal of life. But, as we have repeatedly stated, this economic view of life, resting upon the conception of the division of labour, was only a part of Vedic culture, not the whole of it. The entire scope of life was covered by the Vedic concept of *Varna*.

What is *Varna*? The word *Varna* is derived from the root *Vri* which means to choose or to select. But wherein lies the selection? Or, what is that which we have to select? According to Vedic philosophy, each human being is capable of falling into one of the four categories of propensities, or temperaments, or innate natures;

and *Varna* is the selection of one of these four propensities for the development of one's soul. Thus, there are four *Varnas* or four *Pravrittees* (propensities) of life; and these must be distinguished, at the very outset, from the many *Vrittees* (professions) of life. The *Varna* system, thus, reduces itself not to a fourfold classification of professions or to an application of the socio-economic principle of the division of labour, but rather to a spirituo-psychological classification of human beings with regard to their natures on the basis of their temperament.

The *Varna* system did not regard man as merely an economic automaton, it viewed man as a whole. None can say that to eat, to drink, and to be merry is the be-all and the end-all of human existence; all must endorse Longfellow's statement: 'Dust thou art, to dust returnest, Was not spoken of the soul.' The body must perish, but there is some entity of eternal value beyond the body; for whom the body is and who is not for the body; who uses the body as its instrument and is master of the body. Labour and capital are no doubt for the preservation and upkeep of the body, but is the body only for the body? How can such a proposition be tenable? The body must be for something apart from and beyond the body, and this something is what we call the spirit.

According to the teachings of Vedic philosophy, the ultimate goal or target which each and every human being should place before himself is realization of the divine and self-fulfilment, and it is towards this end that our entire life's pursuits should be directed. It was essentially to help men to move collectively towards this end that the *Varna* system was evolved. Thus the *Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya*, and *Shudra* are not, as is generally believed, the four professions; they are the four propensities of human beings which point out the four different directions accessible to the soul in its journey through life. It is only one of these four propensities that are available at the option of the individual which leads one to acquire material possessions and permits him to involve himself in the physical world. This propensity was known as *Vaishya* temperament, but even this was so channellized that it was not made the be-all and the end-all of one's existence. In the *Varna* system, as we shall see in the course of this chapter, even this material nature of man was spiritualized. Thereby a scheme was evolved whose fundamental objective was that both individually and collectively the entire nation should move towards the attainment of self-realiza-

tion after setting before itself the ideal of *Atmic* development. This was the quintessence of *Varna* philosophy.

Details of the Four Spiritual Propensities

We have said that there are four human propensities. What are they, and how do they arise, are but the logical questions that must present themselves at this point. The explanations are forthcoming from the Sankhya philosophy. According to this philosophy the evolution of the world of matter and life is from *Prakriti* (matter). What is *Prakriti*? *Prakriti* is the homogeneous state of matter in which *Sattva* (unactivity), *Rajas* (activity), and *Tamas* (inactivity) are in equilibrium. When this state of equilibrium was disturbed, the world in its heterogeneous visible form appeared which is called *Vikriti*. It is this very substance or *Vikriti*, which comes into existence from the disturbed state of *Prakriti* with the three qualities of *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*, that goes into the formation of the *Manas* (mind).

Thus the mind has three qualities or attributes, i.e., *Sattvika* (unactive), *Rajasika* (active), and *Tamasika* (inactive). These three attributes of the mind, which work their way out in society, were treated by Vedic sociologists as being equivalent to four different types of human beings. Those in whom the *Sattvika* quality dominates are called *Brahmanas*, those in whom the *Sattvika*-cum-*Rajasika* quality is all powerful are called *Kshatriyas*, those in whom the *Rajasika*-cum-*Tamasika* quality holds its sway are called *Vaishyas*, and those in whom the *Tamasika* quality is all embracing are called *Shudras*. These are not the four professions but, psychologically speaking, are the four main propensities of the human mind. Every profession and all forms of trade, commerce, and industry are included only in the *Vaishya* propensity. Thus it is absolutely clear that Vedic metaphysics underlies Vedic psychology, and it is Vedic psychology which is at the root of Vedic sociology wherein this fourfold division of human society has been visualized. *Varna* only indicates a particular spiritual or psychological frame, bent, or direction of the human mind.

And so it is that now, with the mists of misconception having been cleared from before our eyes, does not our heart leap up when we behold as it were a rainbow shining across from our erstwhile darkened horizons and stormy skies, as we pensively recall Shri Krishna's immortal line from the Gita: 'The four orders of society (*Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya*, and *Shudra*) were created by me

corresponding to the different types of *Gunas* and *Karmas.* Though the author of this creation, I am also its non-doer.'[1] It is in this light and perspective that one should dwell upon Shri Krishna's advice to Arjuna: 'One's own duty, though devoid of merit, is preferable to the duty of another well performed.'[2] What else is this if not a home truth as well as a piece of friendly advice given out by Shri Krishna to all of us? Can we ever hope to contradict our innate natures and attempt any work for which we are most unsuited? Yes, it is a far better thing for each of us to confine ourselves to that piece of work for which the *Guna* is lying latent within us, rather than be caught up in a whirlpool of other activities whose fountain-head is not within ourselves. Even today, in a world of stark materialism, with every banner bearing the emblem: 'All men are equal,' did not Bernard Shaw rise up to contradict the prevailing consensus of opinion when he poured out that all men are basically unequal? Of course Shaw was only referring to the differences in nature, temperament, capabilities, etc., as manifested by the different human beings; he was not concerned with the reasons or the causes of these disparities. It was Vedic culture alone that concerned itself with these problems and shouldered the cross of finding their solutions. Hence the modern world, if it wants to bridge the gap left in this knowledge by one of the greatest thinkers of the day, should turn to the teachings of the Vedic seers.

A person of a *Sattvika* bent of mind with a thorough spiritual outlook on life is a *Brahmana.* One with an admixture of *Sattvika* and *Rajasika* qualities but in whom the *Rajas* predominates comes into the fold of the *Kshatriya.* They both confine their activities to social welfare not because it is their livelihood or profession, but on account of the fact that the *Brahmana* and the *Kshatriya* can fulfil their spiritual urges only by serving society with the power of the brain and the might of the arm respectively. Their self is consistently progressing from manifoldness to oneness, from disunity to unity, from selfishness to selflessness, and instead of entangling itself in the meshes of *Prakriti,* it has well set itself on the onward march to self-realization. Their disinterested service is rewarded by society which caters to their physical needs.

[1] चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः ।
तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विद्ध्यकर्तारमव्ययम् ।। (गीता, ४–१३)

[2] श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् । (गीता, ३–३५)

It has been ordained that a *Brahmana* should never beg for his needs, even though he may be at the point of death, neither should he accumulate nor hoard. His lot is only to serve unfettered and unbidden. He should lead a life of voluntary poverty. Every richness for him lies in self-abnegation. The *Kshatriya* is also forbidden from hankering after wealth. He is a combination of *Sattva* and *Rajas* but his *Rajas* must be *Sattva*-oriented. Despite all his war and other activities, the ideal which he is required to set before himself is the progress towards the *Sattvika* life of the spirit. The *Vaishya* is an admixture of *Rajas* and *Tamas* in his mental attitude or make-up, but the predominance is of the *Rajas* over *Tamas*. Whereas the *Brahmanas* and the *Kshatriyas* lead a life of disinterestedness and selflessness, the *Vaishya* keeps the torch of his self-interest burning before him. The *Shudra* is the one in whom *Tamas* dominates and this makes him inactive, dull, and inert.

We have explained that the Sankhya philosophy visualizes the entire hierarchy of human creation standing as it were on four steps, each step being constructed out of a different *Varna* building material. Modern psychology has also arrived at the same conclusion but only uses different terminology. In modern parlance we can say that the mind has three functions to perform, namely, knowing, willing, and feeling. The men of knowledge who disinterestedly serve society with the dominance of the *Sattvika* quality may be designated as *Brahmanas*. The men of action who are willing to lay down their lives for the cause of the nation and in whom the *Rajasika* quality predominates may be styled as *Kshatriyas*. The men of desire who are attracted and attached to the world of matter, who view life with a feeling of self-interest, and in whom the *Rajasika*-cum-*Tamasika* quality holds its own against everything else may be called *Vaishyas*. And the men whose doings are neither channelled towards knowledge, nor action, nor self-interest, but who are overpowered by the *Tamasika* qualities may be looked upon as the *Shudras*.

It is thus clearly apparent, from the above, that the *Varna* system of social stratification was based upon metaphysical and psychological foundations. It was a positive effort made by the Vedic sociologists to guide, with a conscious effort, social evolution towards a predetermined goal or end, instead of letting the blind, unconscious law of nature mould the social structure. And this could only be brought about by the introduction of a well devised scheme into which each and every individual was required to fit and which, in its turn,

was also suited to as well as catered for the needs of all. Thus the *Varna* system of Vedic culture is naught else but the application of the four fundamental propensities or natures of the different individuals collectively to society in general.

Division of Labour is a Part of Vaishya Propensity Only

The four *Varnas*, as we have explained, are not the four professions or means of livelihood, they are rather the four basic natures of human beings. If these *Varnas* were to be regarded as professions as they are by certain people, the question that would present itself would undoubtedly be as to whether the Vedic Aryans were only aware of four means of livelihood. How is this possible? Professions have always been innumerable. These four *Varnas* are essentially propensities, natures, or temperaments, and the *Vaishya Varna* or the acquisitive propensity which finds its outlet into various economic professions, is only one of them.

Division of labour is associated only with the *Vaishya* temperament and with none other. We can say that a person of this nature constitutes the economic man who looks at everything from a purely monetary angle. But as this *Vaishya* propensity constitutes only one-fourth of the total human propensity as visualized by the *Varna* system, the other three-fourths being embraced by the remaining three *Varnas*, the principle of the division of labour touches only the fringes of the *Varna* system.

The *Varna* system and the principle of the division of labour are neither correlated nor interchangeable. The *Varnas* are the four *Pravrittees* or the four natures of human beings, whereas the division of labour includes the numberless *Vrittis* or professions. These numberless *Vrittis* or professions are merely the ramifications of the same basic human nature known as the *Vaishya* temperament.

A Co-ordinated and Well Balanced Social Evolution was the Aim and Objective of the Varna System

The word *Varna* means to choose. But the question is: what is there to be chosen? *Varna* system upholds that it is not a profession that has to be chosen, but rather a path of life which will be in conformity with the innate nature of the individual and will enable him to attain the goal for which the soul has taken birth in human form. Hence, *Varna* was a spiritual conception and not an economic interpretation of life. The economic nature, propensity,

or potential of man is only one-fourth of the total human propensity. Hence if a person who was supposed to be a *Brahmana* or *Kshatriya* by nature used his talents for the earning of money, he would no longer be considered as a *Brahmana* or a *Kshatriya* but would come into the fold of the *Vaishya*. In Vedic terminology, anything that was done for the sake of money was immediately designated as the function of a *Vaishya*, regardless of the fact as to how very noble was the act. The fundamental thing was the propensity, the nature, the temperament. For it is this which was considered to be real because it sprang out of the inner self; whereas the various professions were only considered to be the outer expressions of merely one of the four basic propensities of man.

Social evolution left to the unconscious, blind forces of nature brings in its wake the economic principle of the division of labour, for it is in this direction that we are driven by the materialistic world. This process can only terminate in the creation of economic inequalities which, in turn, give rise to class conflicts, wars, and social revolutions. The same social evolution, if properly guided and controlled along the psychological principles enunciated in the *Varna* system of Vedic culture, can usher in an era of peace, co-operation, and mutual goodwill.

But why should this be so? This is due to the fact that every evil which the world suffers from, every conflict, war, and revolution has its source in the efforts that are made to solve only the economic problem of man which occupies the forefront in the battalion of our problems. Vedic culture had placed before humanity a refreshingly new outlook on life. It left the economic problem to be grappled with by the *Vaishya*, a man of the worldly nature, and placed before the rest of mankind, a higher and nobler ideal to be aspired to in life.

Vedic culture proclaimed that a life of *Rajas* was superior to the life of *Tamas*, and that a life of *Sattva* was superior to that of *Rajas*. The path for the achievement of life's mission lies in our onward march from *Tamas* to *Rajas* and from *Rajas* to *Sattva*. Thus alone can the journey's end be reached. It is only when one has established one's self in *Sattva*, in peace, harmony, and contentment, that one can be said to have realized *Atma tattva*. This is the *summum bonum* of life. Expounding this principle the Gita observes:

'When through all the doors of this body, through the senses and

the mind, perspicuity, discernment, and understanding shine, then *Sattva* should be regarded as predominant.'[1]

'When greed, activity, selfish undertakings, restlessness, and thirst for enjoyment prevail, then *Rajas* should be regarded as preponderant.'[2]

'When the mind is dark, bewildered, slothful, and lost in delusion, know then that *Tamas* is prevailing.'[3]

The exponents of the principle of the division of labour regard the economic problem as the main and sometimes even as the only problem of man. But the exponents of the *Varna* system regard the economic problem as only one of the many problems humanity has to solve, the main problem being the development of the man into the higher *Sattvika* self. This is the basic difference in outlook between the materialistic and the spiritualistic approaches to life. In the absence of proper guidance and conscious control, social processes can only lead us down a blind alley wherein the only settings would be the signboards bearing the words 'Economics,' 'Money,' and 'Bodily Needs.' But if these were to be regarded as the means and not the ends in themselves, what a difference they would make for the traveller down this alley. In this case the alley, instead of being blind, would have the lamp of spiritual light burning from its furthermost end and the signboards would be changed from the mere 'Economics,' 'Money,' and 'Bodily Needs' into 'Spiritual Realization through the help of Money,' 'Self-Unfoldment by the satisfaction of the Bodily Urges,' etc.

In the *Varna* system the social processes were guided under the conscious control of the leaders of society whose vision was spiritualistic, and who regarded the world of matter and the human frame as being subservient to the realization of the divine in man. This outlook does not ignore the physical world, nor does it deny the economic needs of the body; it only treats them as means for the attainment of higher ends. The spiritual outlook includes the material whilst the material totally excludes the spiritual which is the

[1] सर्वद्वारेषु देहेऽस्मिन् प्रकाश उपजायते।
ज्ञानं यदा तदा विद्याद्विवृद्धं सत्त्वमित्युत ।।
[2] लोभ:प्रवृत्तिरारम्भ: कर्मणामशम: स्पृहा।
रजस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे भरतर्षभ ।।
[3] अप्रकाशोऽप्रवृत्तिश्च प्रमादो मोह एव च।
तमस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे कुरुनन्दन ।। (गीता, १४-११, १२, १३)

more comprehensive. A continuous economic interpretation of human life, which is the logical sequence of the application of the principle of the division of labour to each and every aspect of life, amounts to nothing else other than confining the scope of its activities only to the satisfaction of physical needs. But man is not the body alone, he has a mind, he is the spirit. The *Varna* system of philosophy, without shutting its eyes to the physical needs of man, lays due emphasis on those fundamentals for which the world of matter and the sense-objects are only the means.

We have said that *Varnas* are not the professions but the propensities. One may and does very often change a profession, but no one can change the innate propensity or nature of the individual. Our nature once made or formed continues to remain with us unchangeable for all times, and becomes a part and parcel of our being as well as our very essence. The Vedas have proclaimed: 'When the spiritual guide with his mystic power helps to unfold the nature of his pupil, that remains his permanent possession.'[1] Even modern psychologists make a distinction between knowledge and intelligence. Knowledge, they say, can and does change, but intelligence is something inherent. It is for the teacher to find out the I.Q. of a pupil by means of intelligence tests, and then to adjust his teaching to the inherent capacity of the pupil. This intelligence which does not change, but remains permanent, is the nature of the individual, or is his *Varna* in terms of Vedic expression. If Indian sociologists stated that *Varna* does not change, it remains permanent all one's life, they were voicing the same thing that the modern psychologists and educationists proclaim when dealing with the permanent nature of intelligence. But, unfortunately, the term *Varna* is also used in the sense of professions, and as a profession can and does change, we are unnecessarily involved in the controversy as to whether *Varna* is permanent or changeable.

Use of the word Varna in the Sense of a Profession

The two expressions, viz., different professions and division of labour are tantamount to each other. In the *Varna* system, it was the *Vaishya* alone who represented the different professions. But though this is an irrefutable fact, it cannot be said that the word

[1] आचार्यस्त्वस्य यां जातिं यथावत् विधिपारगः ।
उत्पादयति साविच्या सा सत्या साजरामरा ।। (मनु, २–१४८)

Varna has never been used in the sense of a profession or division of labour. Though principally *Varna* meant propensities, natures, and temperaments of human beings and only the *Vaishya* propensity comprised in itself the various professions, yet the word *Varna* was also being loosely used to denote the various professions.

Whenever the word *Varna* was used to denote *Pravritti* (propensity), it was regarded as being permanent, unchangeable, and innate; when it was used to denote *Vritti* (profession) it was looked upon as changeable. In ancient literature it is often said that a *Shudra* can become a *Brahmana*, and a *Brahmana* can become a *Shudra.*[1] This also held good with regard to the *Kshatriya* and the *Vaishya*. In other words, in certain places we are told that the castes were flexible and not rigid, whereas in other cases the contrary seems to be the position which tends to be upheld. It is due to this fact of the word *Varna* having been indiscriminately used for both propensity as well as profession, for *Pravritti* and for *Vritti,* that we find seemingly contradictory descriptions about it in Sanskrit literature. At one place it is described as unchangeable, at another place as changeable. But the fact to be borne in mind is that wherever and whenever it is mentioned as being unchangeable the reference is to propensity, and at all those places where it is described as changeable the term must be construed to mean the different professions or the means of livelihood. In fact, it can be said that the *Varna* is both changeable as well as unchangeable. It alters because nobody can be forced to stick to only one professsion throughout the entire span of life; it does not change because even though one may take to different professions, there is none the less a continuity of temperament in the same individual throughout every walk of life.

All are Vaishyas in the Modern Age

The modern age is a peculiar one in which the *Vaishya* bird is ever gathering the children of humanity under its wings. Everyone seems to be in the running in the race after money, and this speeds up its accumulation in the hands of the quickest and the fastest, and thereby leads to capital formation. Even the higher and the nobler natures (services) such as those of the *Brahmanas* and *Kshatriyas* have degenerated into money-making professions. All around us

[1] शूद्रो ब्राह्मणतामेति ब्राह्मणश्चैति शूद्रताम्
क्षत्रियाज्जातमेवं तु विद्याद्वैश्यात्तथैव च। (मनु, १०–६५)

we hear the refrain: 'All things human and divine, renown, Honour, and worth at money's shrine go down.' Selflessness and disinterestedness have disappeared. The higher ideals of spiritualism have become an exception and not the rule of the day. But have we ever asked ourselves the question: 'why is this so?'

The reason for this mad rush after filthy lucre is that there is no conscious control over the social forces. Economically and socially we are following the policy of laissez-faire or 'let do.' Society, which is supposed to be an entity of composite consciousness, is today passing through a process of unconscious evolution impelled by the blind forces of nature. As our vision sees nothing but the world of matter and sense-objects, we cry a halt to our progress beyond them and revel in them as though they were the be-all and the end-all of our existence. We not only live for the world of sensual pleasures but we also die for them, and as money is the means to ensure these pleasures we leave no stone unturned for its acquisition.

But Vedic culture sounded a different note. It did not deny the existence of the world of matter and sensual pleasures, it only raised its finger of caution, waved the green flag, signalling to us not to stop at the wayside or to give up this pilgrimage to the promised land. But here again the question arises: how does one resist the charm and meet the challenge of the world of matter and sense-objects?

Materialistic Outlook Leads to Price Inflation and Exaggerates the Significance of the Coin

It is a misconception to hold the view that Vedic culture advises one to run away into the jungle or to renounce the world. Through its acceptance of the world as it stands, this culture upholds Shakespeare's view: 'Allow not nature more than nature needs, Man's life is cheap as beast's.' The Vedic conception is that we tend to be carried away too, too far into the whirlpool of these exaggerated and inflated allurements of the world of matter and sense-objects.

As we exaggerate or over emphasize the material world and its carnal pleasures, the value of money which is the means for their procurement also rises; and this results in the spread of a contagion of pecunio-mania in society which infects every one, and all now start hankering for it. Was Goldsmith wrong when he said: 'Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey, Where wealth accumulates and men decay'? But this is precisely what is happening in our age.

Thus the problem of all problems that faces us today is the devising of a method to get rid of this virus.

Everybody wants money, and then more money, because its purchasing power has become unlimited. How did it acquire such a tremendous power? Time was when the coin was unknown. The peasant toiled in his field, the weaver plied his shuttle, the smith wielded his hammer, and they exchanged the product of their labour with one another. This negotiation or the exchange of commodities was known as the barter system. But this system was too cumbersome because the commodities received in exchange could not be stored for long, nor could they be carried about from place to place. Hence some convenient medium of exchange had to be discovered. This accounts for the evolution of the coin which could be carried in the pocket and taken from place to place. But as time went on, the power concentrated in the coin or money increased considerably because it could purchase food, clothing, land, house, and every other material comfort.

Had the power of the coin remained confined only to this much, no evil would have fallen on the world. But this was not to be. The importance of the coin went on increasing and one could now purchase with it not only the physical necessities and luxuries of life but also the things beyond. The coin could even purchase everything on the face of the earth, it could purchase even man. When the *Brahmana* realized that the power of the coin could be converted into anything, he auctioned himself to the highest bidder and joined this mad race for acquisition and hoarding. The *Kshatriya* did not lag behind. And, of course, the *Vaishya* reigned supreme and became the lord of all he surveyed. This insane craving for and rush after mammon all over the world is due to nothing else than the concentration of immense power in the coin. Vedic sociologists had caught hold of the Gordian knot at this point and had untied it by offering new foundations for the social structure in place of the current economic ones. Instead of allowing the coin to have its sovereign sway and masterdom, they had curbed its power through the evolution of a new social order.

What do we mean when we say that the purchasing power of the coin has been exaggerated in the modern age? The answer to this question lies first of all in considering the circumstances under which it can be said that the purchasing power of the coin is not exaggerated. If the coin can purchase food, clothing, shelter, transport, and

every other material comfort, its value cannot be said to be exaggerated because after all how many houses, clothes, eatables, transport vehicles, as well as the other luxuries of life would the individual need? If money could only purchase loaves and fishes, purple and fine linen, creature comforts, and nothing more than these, how many people would find it worth their while to devote themselves daily only towards the amassing of wealth? A person who is drowned under seven feet of water is not concerned with the fact that there may be a thousand feet of it above those seven feet. All the water that is over and above these seven feet can serve no useful purpose so far as drowning is concerned. Similarly, there is a limit to the extent to which money can fulfil one's physical urges. After this stage of fulfilment, all wealth should be viewed as though it were non-existent.

But this is neither the case nor the facts as they confront us in reality. The whole world hankers after wealth. We earn and save, have enough and to spare, not because money can purchase for us all that we require only for the satisfaction of our physical needs as well as enjoyments, but because we have to hoard and leave it in legacy behind as it alone can purchase for us both respect and authority. In the modern world money can purchase not only the physical but also the non-physical. This is what is meant when we say that the purchasing power of the coin has been exaggerated. Originally it was meant only to purchase the material things of life, but gradually its purchasing power increased and the dragon is now ready to hold the whole world to ransom.

How Vedic Culture Reduced the Importance Attached to Money

In the world of today, as we have said, money can purchase not only the material comforts of life, but also honour and respect and is sometimes even considered to be a passport to heaven. It is this fact that accounts for the modern man to be buried, shall we say, not seven times seven but seventy times seven feet under the mounds of its accumulation and hoarding. Vedic culture had reduced this immense power of the coin by a scheme of decentralization. What was that scheme? Humanity can be said to have jointly as well as severally four broad categories of hopes, ambitions, and aspirations which are: prestige, power, pelf, and play. It is in the very nature of man to aspire for the enjoyment of all these four privileges together. The Vedic scheme of reducing the power of the

coin lay in the decentralization of these four privileges. Let us see how the scheme was elaborated.

The Vedic scheme, as outlined in the *Varna* system, visualized each of these four privileges to be enjoyed separately. The one who enjoyed prestige had to divest himself of power, pelf, and play; another holding power had to be free from prestige, pelf, and play; and the person with pelf as his main occupation could not aspire for prestige, power, and play. Prestige was thus the monopoly of the *Brahmana*, power belonged to the *Kshatriya*, pelf was the share of the *Vaishya*, and play was the birthright of the *Shudra*. Today the race after money is primarily because pelf can purchase even prestige, power, and play. If these four privileges were kept apart, humanity would not be so much caught up in the torrential waterfalls of money.

In other words, we may say that the *Brahmana* served the society by his knowledge, the *Kshatriya* by his actions, the *Vaishya* by his ambitions and desires, and the *Shudra* by his labour. Thus it is that knowledge, action, desire, i.e., the three aspects of the mind, or knowing, willing, feeling, constituted the three channels through which the *Brahmana*, the *Kshatriya*, and the *Vaishya* could serve society. The *Shudra* contributed his share in the form of physical labour. It is these, their respective propensities, natures, or temperaments, that helped them in the discharge of their duties towards their fellow men. Every discharge of duty carried with it a corresponding reward. Thus the *Brahmana* was rewarded for his services through the bequeathing of honour, precedence, respect, and prestige; the *Kshatriya* by the winning of power, authority, command, and domination; the *Vaishya* by the obtaining of wealth, possessions, and property; and the *Shudra* through the enjoyment of fun, frivolity, play, and abandon. But the *Brahmana* never thought in terms of dominating over others, nor did the *Kshatriya* think of precedence over the *Brahmana*, and of course it goes without saying that neither of them gave any consideration whatsoever to the accumulation of wealth. The money-making activity was the prerogative of the *Vaishya* alone who in turn never aspired for the honour due to the *Brahmana* or *Kshatriya*. The *Shudra* had to be content with fun and play. Thus were the four rewards kept separated from one another, and this was responsible for the total elimination of every confusion which comes in the wake of each *Varna* (human being) aspiring for or aiming at all the rewards together.

The *Brahmana* was blessed with prestige and preference in honour to others, but every care was taken to ensure that the seed of pride did not germinate within his mind; and for this purpose it was clearly ordained that he should avoid this preference like a poison.[1] The *Kshatriya* was bestowed with authority and command over others, but the necessary precaution was taken to see that this power did not corrupt him. Even a king could be admonished for the misuse of his authority because it was considered that this power not rightly channelled destroyed primarily his own self as well as all his nearest and dearest ones.[2] The *Vaishya* enjoyed complete economic freedom, but he could purchase only the material needs and nothing more through his earnings. Moreover, it was cited that the stomach does not keep the food intake to itself, but rather after contributing its share towards the digestive process it freely allows the food to pass through and enter into the blood stream so that it can provide the necessary nourishment to the various limbs and organs of the body. Even so the *Vaishya* was warned that he would not be allowed to monopolize the wealth because it was obligatory for him to distribute it and thus contribute towards the welfare of society.[3] A body that is unable to digest its food and provide nourishment to every nerve and fibre is obviously a sick body. Any social system in which all wealth tends to be concentrated in the hands of the *Vaishyas*, who do not distribute it to all members of the society, is apparently in need of some drastic remedy to do away with this evil. The *Shudra* fold only comprised persons of underdeveloped minds. They could not serve society in any other way, or by any other means, except by physical labour.

But even here a *Shudra* was not doomed for the rest of his life to remain only a hewer of wood and drawer of water. Full freedom was allowed to him for the development of his faculties.[4] He could avail himself of every opportunity for furthering his lot in society. Thus we see that Vedic culture did uphold the tenet: worth and not birth is the measure of man. It was only in the latter stages when the system degenerated that the reverse held sway and all the attendant evils were imprinted upon the fabric of Indian life.

[1] सन्मानाद् ब्राम्हणो नित्यमुद्विजेत विषादिव। (मनु, २–१६२)
[2] धर्माद् विचलिते हन्ति नृपमेव सबान्धवम्। (मनु, ७–२८)
[3] दद्याच्च सर्वभूतानामन्नमेव प्रयत्नतः। (मनु)
[4] शूद्रेण तु समस्तावद् यावद्वेदे न जायते। (मनु)

In the *Varna* system *Pravritti* (propensity) and *Vritti* (profession) were correlated. A person of intellectual calibre took to teaching, of commanding disposition to the ranks of the army, police, and administration, of worldly ambitions and desires to trade and commerce. When the duty or profession of each is correlated to his propensity, the individual is in a position to perform his mission well. And is it not natural under such circumstances for justice to demand the award of corresponding privileges by society? Yes, duties and privileges must go together, because whereas duty binds, privilege frees; duty limits the privilege, privilege sets an obligation to duty.

But in the modern world, everyone demands only privileges; none is prepared to shoulder the cross of duty and obligation. Further, each and every one of us desires far more privileges to be bestowed upon him than are commensurate with his duties. The *Brahmana* wants not only honour, respect, and prestige, but he also desires power, pelf, and play all together. The same holds good for the others. As every privilege today can be procured with money, there is a continuous scramble for the accumulation of wealth. We may style ourselves as *Brahmanas* or *Kshatriyas*, but in effect we are all *Vaishyas*. Pelf has become so powerful that it is always ready to bid for, and even outbid prestige, power, and play by paying the price for their possession.

What did the *Varna* system do to remedy this social confusion, wherein each one disregards his propensity and turns to a *Vaishya* life? It remedied this evil by reducing the significance of wealth. How was this effected? It evolved a social system in which prestige, power, pelf, and play were safely kept apart and at a distance from one another. In the social hierarchy the *Brahmana* was awarded the first place, the *Kshatriya* the second, and the *Vaishya* the third. Vedic sociologists realized that the social chariot moved on two wheels, selfishness and selflessness; neither of them could singly carry the burden of social responsibilities. Moreover, society as a whole could progress only if every selfishness culminated in selflessness. Therefore, despite the fact that the economic side of life was not neglected, the Vedic masters directed all the social schemes to find their haven in the achievement of selflessness. Their ultimate goal was non-attachment to the world of matter and sense-objects by each and every individual. The *Brahmana* and the *Kshatriya* served society with selflessness and non-attachment;

the *Vaishya* and the *Shudra* contributed towards its progress by selfishness and attachment. All along, every selfishness and attachment led to selflessness and non-attachment because the latter were crowned with prestige and power, whereas the former were denied these privileges. This was the method whereby the Vedic system reduced the importance of the coin and brought in harmony and co-operation instead of the chaos and confusion so widely prevalent today in the social structure. The Confucian idealism that the nobler man is proficient in the knowledge of his duty and the inferior man is proficient only in money making is an echo of the Vedic concept enshrined in *Varna* ideology.

The basic idea underlying the *Varna* system is the segregation of human propensities, which when jumbled together create chaotic conditions and throw the social machinery out of gear. A man of knowledge should devote himself whole heartedly to the cultivation of learning, and think of the reward only in terms of honour, respect, and prestige that go with this life. A man of action should assiduously apply himself to virile and administrative activities, and expect the reward by way of power and authority that this life brings. A man of ambition and worldly desires should summon all his energies to the creation or acquisition of wealth, and then be content with the reward of worldly pleasures. A man of sinews and muscles with no intellectual equipment should serve society with his physical labour and not find fault with his destiny, if he derived nothing more than fun, frolic, and play from life. The scheme was to keep the four propensities of human beings segregated and partitioned, instead of letting them join together in one and the same individual.

The evil in our social structure is that a person with a certain propensity aspires for the rewards allocated to the other propensities. If a *Brahmana* gets prestige, the *Kshatriya* derives power, the *Vaishya* obtains pelf, the *Shudra* is offered play, and the relative gradation is maintained with the *Brahmana* at the top, the *Kshatriya* next to him, and the *Vaishya* holding the third rank in social order, there would be no possibility of social disruption being brought about by a continuous craving for wealth. The present age is an epoch of *Vaishyas*. This is so not because everybody is in such dire need of money; or that all of us have such a strong and natural inclination for it. It is so because the coin has become so powerful that it can purchase not only men and materials but also power, prestige, and everything else that humanity has to offer. The basic nature of man

is such that he does not want money as much as he craves for prestige and power, but since money has become the means whereby he can purchase even these privileges he hankers so much after it. Shakespeare penned a truism when he wrote: 'Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear; Robes and furr'd gowns hide all.'

If we could alter the prevalent social values and reduce the significance of the coin, the entire social fabric would assume a new appearance. This race for acquisition would then have outrun its course and a new social order would emerge. It is this aspect of the *Varna* system alone that can save the world from ruin and devastation; in the alternative the world must be shattered to bits and pieces. Do we not come across several young men who could benefit society by their aptitudes for research and knowledge as well as by their pre-eminent disposition for active administrative services? But are they not driven to hanker after money because they realize that this is the only weapon in their hands for obtaining prestige and power? Such lives could positively be put to better use if prestige and power could be won by means other than wealth.

It is the Function of the State to Co-ordinate Propensities with Professions

In Applied Psychology, emphasis is laid on the co-ordination of propensities with professions. Those individuals who choose a profession with no propensity or aptitude for it are always bound to end in failure. It was this very principle that was applied in the *Varna* system, wherein a person with a *Brahmana* or a *Kshatriya* or a *Vaishya* propensity was required to choose a profession which would be in conformity with his nature. It is undoubtedly the duty of the State to organise a cadre of psychologists who could advise the younger generation to choose a particular course of education in accordance with their different propensities. This in turn could stand them in good stead with regard to the choice of their professions in adulthood. Thus the choice of a profession in conformity with one's propensity and with the objective of serving the society is the *duty* which every citizen performs for the welfare of the State, and for this he has the *right* to demand a corresponding *reward* from the State.

It was this maintenance of a proper relationship between right and duty as well as between duty and reward that was the function

of the *Varna* system. This today is the imperative need for the State to uphold in order to ensure a better succeeding generation. It is the duty of the State to ensure that persons of a *Brahmana* disposition engage themselves in professions corresponding to the ideals of selflessness and non-attachment, but at the same time the State should also cater to their physical needs. Further, the State should also see that persons engaged in these professions are given the respect, the honour, and the prestige that is due to them. The same should also hold good with the other propensities and professions. Propensity should determine profession, and profession in turn should determine reward.

Today the only reward which every individual desires is money. As this reward does not necessitate a correspondence between propensities and professions, society is in a state of total confusion. It is the duty of the State to ensure that the *Brahmana* enjoys prestige, but not power, pelf, and play; the *Kshatriya* derives power; the *Vaishya* obtains pelf; and the *Shudra* is satisfied with play. It is the responsibility of the State to establish this scheme both by tradition as well as by practice. It must ensure that persons of *Brahmana* and *Kshatriya* propensities occupy the first places in the rank and file of society and that the *Vaishya* propensity is graded as the third in the hierarchy. If such a tradition is established and upheld, this mad rush for greed, acquisition, and hoarding will automatically come to an end.

But such a situation can be ushered in only by a conscious and deliberate effort on the part of the State. The State has to regulate and ensure that this scramble to monopolize all the rewards, namely, prestige, power, pelf, and play should stop. A citizen, on his part, should make up his mind to choose only one of them whilst determining the choice of his profession. In the same manner that the State lays down that a man can marry only one woman, and not every woman that he may have a fascination for, so also the State should regulate that a person can be expected to enjoy only one reward and not all. Let not each one run after every reward that society offers, for in that way lies the confusion. What a spectacle it is to behold a person of *Brahmanical* propensities sitting in a stall holding a balance in his hands, weighing and selling commodities to his customers! How can we feel happy with such a sorry state of affairs? But all this can prevail only when money becomes a god as it has become in the modern world.

Varna System and Division of Labour Compared and Contrasted

The *Varna* system aims at reducing the significance of money by a scheme of decentralization of the rewards accruing from the different professions. Is the same possible through the working out of the principle of the division of labour which deals only with the economic aspect of social stratification as against the *Varna* system which concerns itself with the whole of it? It is essentially in this respect that *Varna* and division of labour, though tackling a fundamental social problem, differ from each other, inasmuch as the former is more comprehensive than the latter because it embraces the whole of life whereas the latter only deals with a part of it.

But it is often argued that labour need not necessarily be economic or paid for. What else are the selfless, not attached efforts of the *Brahmanas* and the *Kshatriyas,* if not a form of labour, the only difference being that it is unpaid for in terms of money value. In this context, even Economic Theory in its computation of National Income clearly provides for the inclusion of certain goods and services which are unpaid for such as housewife's labour, the goods that are consumed by the producers themselves, etc. Thus does it not merely amount to the fact that whereas the *Vaishyas* and the *Shudras* serve society by their self-seeking and wealth-oriented labour, the *Brahmanas* and the *Kshatriyas* serve it by their selfless labour? If the meaning of labour is to be taken in this wide sense, there should be no basic difference between the *Varna* system and the principle of the division of labour.

The *Varna* system ultimately aims at guiding and leading society from selfishness to selflessness, from attachment to non-attachment, from narrowness to universality. In this system sacrifice, surrender, and service are the master keys for opening the doors of social and moral progress. If these qualities can also be designated as labour, *Varna* undoubtedly becomes more or less synonymous with the principle of division of labour.

We maintain that in spite of this similarity there would still be one very major difference between the two. This is due to the fact that the division of labour is an unconscious, blind, and automatic process of social evolution which proceeds without any external guidance. But the *Varna* system is a conscious, deliberate, guided, and planned process of social evolution imposed upon society by the law-givers whose proclaimed objective was ultimately to lead it to spiritual realization. The principle of the division of

labour by itself can only lead us to economic considerations and to the evolution of the economic man which is a partial and a very incomplete understanding of the nature of man as a whole. Further the principle of the division of labour progressively applied leads to extreme specialization. This in turn creates an outlook in society whereby the individual is compelled to clothe himself with the vestures of selfishness. For in such a society the fundamental motto is 'each one for himself and God for all.' But no further comments are needed to show that the *Varna* system enables the individual to emerge triumphantly from his cocoon of selfishness and thereafter speedily wing his way towards the haven of selflessness.

Varna System and Plato

The four rivers of the *Varna* system and the innumerable streams of the principle of the division of labour ultimately find their way to the same ocean, namely, the ocean of social stratification. In the western world also, where they interpret society as an application of the principle of the division of labour, society is divided into four broad groups, namely, the clergy, the soldier, the merchant, and the labourer. Are not these divisions the same as those of the *Varna* system which we have been discussing? The clergy is analogous to the *Brahmana*, the soldier to the *Kshatriya*, the merchant to the *Vaishya*, and the labourer to the *Shudra*. Regardless of the East or the West, it is not the nomenclature that matters, it is the propensity which is the more important.

A similar idea is found in the Greek philosopher Plato's *Republic*. He stated: 'The heads of the State are philosophers. They are its guardians. They will not possess any private property. Nobody will be denied admission to their house. It will be open to all. Their hospitality will not be confined to a select few. They will be the ruling class. Next come the warriors. They are the men of courage, having a control over their senses, well-versed in the art of warfare. All their needs will be met by the State as they sacrifice themselves for it. They should be provided neither more nor less. All of them should dine at the same table and live in camps. They should realize that God has planted in their hearts a divine treasure which is more precious than silver and gold. Material wealth will defile the purity of their spiritual treasure for the coin has been responsible for innumerable upheavals in the world. It is sin for them to touch silver and gold, even to enter a house where these are hoarded is a defile-

ment. To put an ornament of these metals or to eat or drink in utensils made of them is abhorrent. If the philosophers and warriors will live up to these ideals, they will be able to save themselves, and the society from ruin. When these philosophers, guardians, and warriors accumulate wealth, when they have lands, property and money, they cease to be heads of the State and become traders and merchants, and instead of being the servants of the State try to become its oppressive masters. They begin hating others and are in turn hated, they conspire against others and are in turn conspired against.'

Plato divided society into three classes: guardians or philosophers; warriors, soldiers, or the militant class; merchants, artisans, agriculturists, slaves, or the servant class. Similar to the *Varna* system of Vedic culture, Plato has also made this classification on psychological grounds. He writes in the fourth book of the *Republic*:

'Has the soul three kinds of predilection? Why not? When society has three classes, naturally the soul must have three natures as the individual's qualities are reflected in society.'

Men may be engaged in professions incompatible with their propensities which is considered by Plato to be equivalent to social disorganization. He is of the opinion that it is the duty of the State to guard against such confusion. He writes: 'When a person, merchant or artisan by nature, feels proud and tries to enter the warrior class on the strength of his wealth, when a warrior without qualifications tries to enter the higher class of the guardian or the senator, when one person tries to do the jobs meant for different natures, society gets disorganised. To keep the State well organised it is imperative that men of different propensities should engage in professions compatible with their nature.'

Vedic culture had evolved a scheme of life the object of which was to build society on spiritual foundations and to give it a positive direction rather than let it drift. This was the scheme known as the *Varna* system. It is neither fair nor just to judge its practicability, its philosophy, as well as its merits and utility, from the caste system which is in vogue today. The system prevailing today is only a remnant of what it was, and to treat the relics or the remains as being equivalent to the original structure cannot be a proper understanding. But the fact that these relics are in existence, can only betoken of a time when there must have stood a fine sculpture reminiscent of the glories of the past.

CHAPTER XI

MODERN MATERIAL PSYCHOLOGY VERSUS VEDIC SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGY

TRUTH IS one and indivisible. This is so because of its very nature. Two contradictory facts cannot be said to be equally true for they will negate each other. If one of them is true, the other is bound to be untrue. If, instead of oneness, we observe manyness in something which we think to be true, it is not manyness but variety in oneness depicting the various facets of truth.

All over the globe, man has been in search of truth, at all times and in all climes. Why is this so? It is so because man is possessed of a faculty called the mind, the intellect, the understanding, the reason, or the thinking apparatus. The function of this faculty is to seek out the shining pebbles of truth from the seashore where they lie hidden amidst the sands of untruth. Man like Pontius Pilate has always been questioning: 'What is truth?'

The Sankhya system of Indian philosophy affirms that evolution is a manifestation of *Prakriti* from indefiniteness to definiteness. The first manifestation of definiteness is quantitative which Sankhya calls *Mahat*, the second manifestation of definiteness is qualitative and is called *Ahankara* or the ego which is another name for the mind. In other words, it means that unconscious matter in the course of evolution develops consciousness which in its turn is the cause of all this variegated cosmic existence. This consciousness or *Ahankara* of Kapila, the founder of the Sankhya system of Indian philosophy, is Reason of the German philosopher Hegel who declared that the universe was the manifestation of Reason.

Why did Kapila in India and Hegel in Germany assert that the origin of the world was from *Ahankara*, i.e., the ego or from *Manas tattva*, i.e., the mind or Reason? They made this assertion because they found rationality and reason unravelling themselves at every stage in the course of evolution. There was nothing that was irrational or illogical in the structure of the universe. Thus it was that, from the tiniest atom to the stupendous material world, everything was subject to the law of causation. Whatever there is, is there, because it cannot but be so due t[illegible] operative compulsion of its rationality and reason. T[illegible] ned and adjusted to one another that

nothing but teleological reason can be at the root of it all, irrespective of the fact whether it be conscious or unconscious. Delving into the depths of things we arrive at nothing but reason and logic, out of which are born the fundamental irrefutable principles of truth which form the foundations of the various sciences known as mathematics, physics, chemistry, mechanics, etc. The fountain head of all these sciences and technologies is the *Manas tattva* of Kapila and the Reason of Hegel. The conclusion of both philosophers is the same though their terminology may be different.

Mind and Soul Unknown and Unknowable

If mind is the basic principle underlying the structure of the universe, it is but natural for man to enquire: what is mind? Humanity has been at pains to investigate this problem since man began to probe into the mysteries of life. We hear of Socrates, a Greek philosopher, centuries before Christ confronting everyone he came across with the query as to whether one knew oneself. 'Know thyself' was his advice to one and all. People thought that they knew themselves, but after an hour's discussion with him they realized that they knew about everything else except themselves. His contention was that whereas the others did not even realize that they knew nothing or very little about themselves, all his knowledge consisted in the understanding that he did not know himself. Like Socrates, Indian saints also had devoted immense thought to the understanding of the nature of the mind, and their conclusion was not different from that of this Greek philosopher. We come across a statement to this effect in Isha Upanishad which says: 'One who thinks he does not know, knows; and one who thinks he knows, does not know. He is unknown to those who claim to know Him and those who say they do not know Him, know Him.'[1]

Is, then, this fundamental principle from which all consciousness emanates, this principle which imparts rationality and reason to every particle of nature in the universe, unknown and unknowable? At this point the materialistic and the spiritualistic thoughts branch off into different paths. The materialistic postulate is that what is beyond the senses, either with or without external aids, is incomprehensible. Herbert Spencer, a philosopher of the nineteenth

[1] यस्यामतं मतं तस्य मतं यस्य न वेद सः ।
अविज्ञातं विजानताम् विज्ञातमविजानताम् ॥ (केन, २–३)

century, has divided substantial existences into two categories: knowable and unknowable. In his opinion, the fundamental and ultimate in us is unknown and unknowable, and it is meaningless to grapple with it. We should confine ourselves to the known and knowable. Vedic thought, grounded in spirituality as it is, does not deny the unknowable character of the ultimate reality of our being. But at the same time it asserts that the unknown is not entirely unknown or unknowable, as there are positive evidences when we experience glimpses of our own so called unknown self within ourselves.

Western thinkers applied themselves to the investigation of the knowable and developed the modern sciences which are enlarging their scope day by day. These sciences fall into two categories: positive and social. Positive sciences are those like mechanics, physics, and chemistry; social sciences are the ones like history, politics, economics, and sociology. Scientific methods of observation, experiment, and comparison which have always been applied to the study of positive sciences are now also being applied to humanities or social sciences. And as such the latter are gradually entering the arena so far clearly demarcated for the positive sciences. Not only this, but the field for the application of the scientific method is also being widened, and even mind and consciousness are being drawn into the scope of positive sciences. One may ask as to how the scientific method of observation, experiment, and comparison can be applicable to mind and consciousness which are likely to fall within the category of the unknown and unknowable. But this is so because the modern methods are so exacting that even these sciences are submitting themselves to their investigational operations. This statement deserves some further clarification.

As stated above, our main problem is to know this self. The question that naturally arises is: what is this self? Is this self the soul? The materialist says that the soul, even if it exists, is unknown and unknowable because it cannot be subjected to observation, experiment, and comparison. A thing which cannot be made an object of study by scientific methods should be left to the vagaries of speculative metaphysicians. If not the soul, can the mind be made an object of study? Even the mind, they say, being nonmaterial cannot be subjected to observation, experiment, and comparison. What is mind? What is its nature? Does it actually exist,

or is it only an hypothesis? Is its entity something apart from the *nervous system, or is the nervous system itself the mind*? All these questions assail us when we look upon mind as the self.

Can the nervous system be made an object of study? Physiologists have applied their knowledge and technique to the study of the nervous system by scientific methods because it can be subjected to observation, experiment, and comparison. But here again some insurmountable difficulties block the path. The study of the nervous system reveals that there are two sets of nerves, the afferent and the efferent. Afferent nerves carry the sensations from the world outside to the brain inside, and from here, after being interpreted, efferent nerves carry back the necessary messages of the brain to the organs of the body for activity or passivity as the case may be.

Now, therefore, the question that arises is: who is it that issues an order or interprets the message? Spiritualists say that the interpreter is the self, it is the soul; which the materialists do not wish to include in the scope of their investigations. So modern psychology finds no substance in such an approach to the study of the nervous system because even here the unknown and unknowable self peeps in to demand an explanation. Psychology has passed through different phases in the course of its development, and all along, its attempt has been to shift its scope of study from the unknown and unknowable to the known and knowable. Time was when its field of study pertained to the attributes of the soul, but as it realized that the soul was something intangible, it shifted its field and emphasis to the study of the attributes of the mind. But the mind being as intangible as the soul itself, it once again shifted its area to the study of the nervous system. As far as the nervous system is concerned, though it could be physically experienced and experimented upon, yet the problem of an interpreter had to be solved and the unknowable had always to be faced. So modern psychology extricated itself from the study of the soul, the mind, the consciousness, as well as the nervous system, because their study always landed it into the realm of the speculative unknown. And it decided to stand shoulder to shoulder with the positive sciences where it could rely upon the scientific methods of observation and experiment.

Modern Psychology is a Material Psychology

In this context, modern psychology can be termed as a material psychology because it has severed or is gradually severing its associa-

tion with the soul, the mind, the consciousness, the nervous system. It is assuming a new form by concentrating on the study of the behaviour of the individual which is a material manifestation of his inward reaction to environment.

What do we know about the individual? We may talk infinitely about his soul, mind, consciousness, and nervous system which none the less continue to occupy their stronghold in the realm of the unknowable. But the things which we can see, observe, compare, contrast, and experiment upon are nothing else but his behaviour which ushers us into the sphere of the knowable. We know nothing about the soul, the mind, etc., except certain basic facts pertaining to the individual's reaction when confronted with a given situation. For example, two persons may meet and immediately pick up a quarrel with each other, whereas two other persons may have met and embraced each other. What do we know of these people other than that which we observe by way of their two different modes of behaviour? The function of psychology, therefore according to modern psychologists and thinkers, is to study this limited field of human behaviour which can be made the subject of observation, experiment, and comparison and which is material in its expression. Thus following this line of argument, modern psychology has also branched itself off into experimental psychology with laboratory arrangements as elaborate and complicated as those of the physical laboratories. And with these it measures the behaviouristic modes and expressions of the individual.

Modern Psychology Studies Behaviour

Modern psychology does not study the soul, or the mind, or the consciousness. Its function is only to study the individual's or the group's behaviour ensuing from a given set of circumstances. This was Watson's contribution to psychology in the nineteenth century. Besides putting forward their theories on the behaviouristic interpretations of psychology, Thorndike and Pavlov proceeded with their experiments on animals which contributed to the development of Educational Psychology. The idea of making behaviourism the core of psychology originated in the fact that it could be subjected to scientific methods of treatment. Psychologists studied the stimulus-response behaviour of animals by the physical methods of observation, experiment, and comparison and deduced certain laws applicable to all living beings. These psychologists thus con-

fined themselves to the study of behaviour as this alone could be termed the known and the knowable of an individual.

Freud, amongst modern psychologists, can be said to have ventured into the realm of the unknown and unknowable by developing the idea of the unconscious. But he also circumscribed his field to the study and observation of the behaviour of a man. The various complexes mentioned in the psycho-analytical writings exhibit themselves in the form of any abnormal behaviour of the person concerned. Their study is nothing but an analysis of the behaviour of a few abnormal persons.

We, therefore, conclude that modern psychology is a materialistic psychology because it excludes from its domain the soul, the mind, or the consciousness. It is a behaviouristic psychology as it confines itself only to the study of that part of total behaviour which can be subjected to the physical tests of observation and experiment in the laboratory. It is essentially a psychology of the known and knowable. And if it makes a mention of the unknown and unknowable, it does so only of a very limited portion of it which it thinks falls within the purview of the known and the knowable. Its main concern is only to deal with the material aspect of the mind or the behaviour, and hence we have given it the appellation of material psychology which though absolutely true does sound to be a contradiction in terms.

Material Psychology versus Spiritual Psychology

As against material psychology the Vedic teachers had developed a spiritual psychology of their own. They believed, like Spencer, that the ultimate was unknown and unknowable, and upheld that he who says he knows does not know and he alone knows who knows that he does not know. Yet they proclaimed that it was perfectly possible to have a glimpse of the ultimate unknown reality that is embodied in man. Since they had stepped into the realm of the unknown and made it known, we have termed their psychology as spiritual psychology against the material psychology which has shifted its interest of study from the soul and consciousness to the behaviour of man. This is so because the former cannot be made the subject of experimentation while the latter submits itself to laboratory tests as well as to other scientific methods.

Let us now return to our original question which was: what is self, soul, mind, consciousness, or by whatever other name we

may call it? Does it and can it exist independently of the body? Can it be known or made known? The answers to all these questions as handed out by the Vedic seers were in the affirmative. We shall presently consider the arguments they advanced to prove that the unknown was not entirely unknown and that all of us could have a glimpse of the self and be convinced of its existence independent of the body.

Mind and Soul Not Entirely Unknown and Unknowable

Mandukya Upanishad describes the following four phases of the spirit's existence:

Jagrata (the wakeful phase),
Swapna (the dreaming phase),
Sushupti (the dreamless sleeping phase), and
Tureeya (the essential phase).

It is essential for us to know the first two phases in the present context: *Jagrata* and *Swapna*.

What is the wakeful or *Jagrata* phase of the spirit? It is a phase when we are fully awake, conscious of the world of matter and its objects around us. Here the eyes perceive colours, the ears hear sounds, the senses of touch, taste, and smell are capable of reacting either favourably or repugnantly. Likewise the hands, feet, and other organs of action can and do perform their necessary functions.

What is the dreaming or *Swapna* phase of the spirit? It is a state when our organs of sense perception and action get submerged with and enter into a restful sleep with the eyes closed; when the ears, the nose, the tongue, the skin, the hands, and the feet cease to perform their usual functions. It is a phase when the eyes even if open do not see the objects physically present, but can see the things non-existent even if shut; when the ears do not hear the drums beating in the vicinity but can hear certain totally absent sounds. Here the nose, the tongue, the skin, refuse to give the usual response to the objects present, but are capable of performing their functions accurately even though the object is not there to excite them to action. In the dreaming phase of the spirit we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch without the help of a single sense-organ and can hold things and run races without using the hands and the feet. Not only this, but the very objects we seem to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch in the dreaming state when these organs are not functioning are as clear and distinct as they would be in the waking

state. So much so, that if one were to close one's eyes (in the waking state) in order to prevent the sense-organs from functioning and try to awaken the sense-images with the help of imagination (or in other words try to visualize things) the response would not correspond in the matter of liveliness to that of the sleep-cum-dreaming state. Thus when one sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches, holds, or walks in the dreaming state, one feels as if one were wide awake.

The Upanishad states that in the waking phase the organs of the body on the one hand, and the soul, the mind, or the consciousness, by whatever name we may call it, on the other, are so interwoven with each other that they cannot be separately recognised. But in the dreaming phase these two entities are separated, one from the other, and the unknowable enters into the realm of the knowable. Thus we can have a glimpse of this non-material existence which, in spite of being completely interwoven with the material element, is more than capable of its own separate unfoldment at certain times. The experiences of the dreaming phase of the spirit are living testimonies to the separate existence of the soul, mind, or consciousness. As this phase is a common experience of one and all of us, we cannot but agree that, even though unknowingly, we do unconsciously know the entity which is not the body.

To put it differently, why is it that whilst in sleep, though the eyes are closed we seem to see things better than with open eyes, and though the ears are plugged we can hear sounds which the unobstructed ears could never hear? How is it that despite the other organs of the body lying dormant we perform their functions without their aid and with greater ease and grace? Does it not prove that there is an entity apart from the body residing in the body? This is not an inferential conclusion. It is everybody's common experience which can be subjected to the scientific methods of observation, experiment, and comparison. All of us are caught in this recurring phenomenon when we retire to bed at night. Does not this experience signify that a substance which is not the body exists in us which can see without eyes, hear without ears, smell without nose, taste without tongue, feel the touch without a skin, hold without hands, and walk without feet?

The Upanishads, with the help of this demonstrative experience of the dreaming state, have tried to establish substantially the existence of the soul, mind, or consciousness as being independent of the body. They further stress that though these are inseparable in

the waking state, it is in their very nature to manifest themselves as separate entities in the dreaming state. This entity which is not the body, but is apart and distinct from the body, may be given any name, i.e., spirit, soul, mind, consciousness. After all, as Shakespeare says: 'What's in a name?' But the fundamental fact remains that there is a non-material existence which can function without the body and without which the body can do nothing at all.

The material psychologists refuse to accept this hypothesis. They attribute the vividness of images in the dreaming state to the stimulation of the nerve-cells which translate sensations into perception. But one may ask, how are the nerve-cells stimulated without a stimulus in the dreaming state in a manner so as to enable the functions of the organs to be performed without the organs participating in them?

In the waking state the nerve-cells respond to the sensations emanating from the material objects outside and passing through the gateway of the senses. But how do the nerve-cells respond in the dreaming state with the same vividness as in wakefulness without the presence of material objects and with the sense-organs in a dormant state? One may further ask, who is it that interprets the message reaching the nerve-cells whether through or without the sense-organs? Nerve-cells are essentially a material mechanism. *Matter cannot interpret matter, and if it does, it is not matter.* Hence, merely to enter into a discussion of stimulus-response is meaningless because there must be a mechanism between a stimulus and its response. It is this mechanism which gives a meaning to the stimulus. But, what is that which gives meaning to the stimulus and elicits the corresponding response? If it be not consciousness, what else could it be? This postulate must be accepted because in a purely mechanical world a stimulus should ever remain a stimulus and a sensation should ever remain a sensation. Further, to argue that the phenomenon of nerve-cells playing the role of interpreters is a mystery of nature amounts to side-tracking the question. How can a material substance be both the subject and the object at the same time?

If, however, the question of the nerve-cells being both the subject and the object is answered by accepting it to be an unresolvable mystery like all other mysteries of nature, then, another question that arises is: why should we accept one mystery in preference to the other. In other words, why should a material mystery be

allowed to score over a so-called spiritual mystery, even though the spiritual analysis appears to be more logically worked out within its own framework? After all, material psychology does not tread the delicate ground of the mind or consciousness, because these are mystic terms beyond the pale of experimentation. The same applies to the hypothesis of the nerve-cells playing the role of interpreters.

The proposition of the Upanishads is that the nerve-cells being material in composition cannot operate as the seer, the hearer, or the smeller. The entity which sees through and without the nerve-cells, functions with or without the senses, interprets all the sensations into perceptions, and acts in a meaningful way is the soul, the mind, the consciousness. Though it is unknown and unknowable, yet in our dreaming phase each one of us can get a glimpse of it because it enters into the realm of the apparently known and apparently knowable by separating itself from the body.

Nature of the Soul: Jagrata, Swapna, Sushupti

After having established the independent existence of the soul, the mind, or the consciousness, the Upanishadic teachers were confronted with the question as to what was the nature of the soul. In this context the Upanishadic analysis once again took recourse to the four phases of the spirit's existence, the wakeful phase, the dreaming phase, the dreamless sleeping phase, and the essential phase. The first three phases are within the realm of the known and the knowable, and clearly define and depict the nature of the soul leaving nothing to inference, conjecture, or imagination. These three phases are matters of daily personal experiences of one and all of us.

In the waking state (*Jagrata*), the body and the consciousness are inseparable, indistinguishable, one and the same. In the dreaming state (*Swapna*) both of them separate themselves from each other; and one performs the functions of the senses without the senses participating in what is being done. One sees without the eyes and hears without the ears. This perception in the dreaming state without the sense-activity cannot be attributed to memory. The recalling of images and happenings does not present them in so vivid, distinct, and real an outline as they assume in the dreaming state. A Chinese philosopher, Chawng-ze, said that he dreamt that he was a butterfly.

He posed the question: what was the truth, whether he was Chawng-ze and was dreaming that he was a butterfly, or in reality he was a butterfly and was dreaming that he was Chawng-ze. The dreaming state in which the senses become dormant is so much similar to the waking state that the cognition of both the states is practically indistinguishable. Who is it, or what is that which sees, hears, smells, tastes, and touches in the dreaming state in exactly the same manner as one would do in the waking state but without the sense-organs? We have seen that it is not memory nor the nerve-cells. And so it is that the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad states: 'Though everyone is aware of the experiences, no one sees the experiencer.'[1]

Then, there is a third phase of our being which we have called the dreamless sleeping phase (*Sushupti*). What happens when a person goes into a deep sleep? He loses consciousness of the body, he loses contact with the mind; he goes into a state in which there is neither sensation nor dream, when all consciousness, physical and mental, disappears. But is the person dead? No, after an unconscious, dreamless state of six to seven hours he returns to the world of consciousness and exclaims: 'what a joy, what a blissful experience, no sensation, no disturbance, no, not even a dream!' Why does he say that he has had an inexplicable experience of blissful existence? The Upanishad says that herein lies the answer to the question as to what is the nature of the soul.

When we pass on from the waking state to the dreaming state, the inseparableness of the body from the soul, the mind, the consciousness gets loosened and the latter begins to function independently of the body. When, however, we pass on from the dreaming state to the dreamless sleeping state, the separation between the material and the non-material becomes perfect. And the soul separating itself from the body, where it had been linked to the sense-perception, and from the mind, where it had harboured itself in the dream world performing its functions without the aid of the senses, enters into its own nature which is a blissful unruffled state of existence. It is thus that after a repose of a few hours when we return to the waking state we exclaim: 'what a joy!'

This remembrance of the joyful existence is of that state of consciousness when it got entirely separated from the body or the mind and came into its very own. *Sushupti* or the dreamless sleeping

[1] आराममस्य पश्यन्ति न तं पश्यति कश्चन। (बृहदारण्यक, ४–३–१४)

phase of the spirit is a phase when the body for all practical purposes is almost dead to the soul and the soul, extricating itself from the tentacles of the body, enjoys perfect freedom. This blissful state brought about by the disentanglement of the mind from the body is the most inherent nature of the soul and is the common experience of all of us when we pass through these three phases of the spirit's existence.

But all these three phases fall within the purview of the known and knowable. There is also a phase of the soul or consciousness which is unknown and unknowable. The Upanishads have called it the *Tureeya* or the essential phase. All that we know of the soul or consciousness in the first three phases is infinitesimally small compared to what it actually is in its essential, unknown, and unknowable or *Tureeya* phase. When a man is aware of this *Tureeya* phase of his consciousness he can be said to have emerged from individuality and entered into universality. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad describes this *Tureeya* phase of the spirit's existence as: 'the kingdom of Brahma, man's highest goal, supreme treasure, and greatest bliss.' It attributes lack of knowledge of this state to the fact that creatures live in the bonds of ignorance.[1]

In brief, the basic concept underlying spiritual psychology is that there is a non-material entity residing in this material substance called the body and both are separate and independent states of existence. Recognition of this truth means the lifting of the anchor to enable the vessel of Vedic culture to propel its way through unknown and mysterious waters. In this materialistic age of the twentieth century, psychology has ceased to talk in terms of the mind, the consciousness, or the soul, as they are non-material, unknown, and unknowable existences. Instead it has switched on to the discussion of behaviour which can be experimented upon by specific and concrete methods, and is within the range of the known and the knowable. Vedic psychology, however, grounded in spirituality as it is, has never given up its quest for the soul or consciousness. The running theme all along the Vedic scriptures is a search for the spiritual principle in man which stands as contradistinguished from every material conception of him.

[1] एषा अस्य परमा गतिः एषा अस्य परमा संपत् एषः अस्य परमो लोकः एषः अस्य परम आनन्द एतस्यैव आनन्दस्य अन्यानि भूतानि मात्राम् उपजीवन्ति। (बृहदारण्यक, ४–३–३१)

Dialogue between Prajapati and Indra

The Rishis have tried to explain by various methods contained in the Upanishads, the separateness of the mind, the consciousness, and the soul from the body. In Chhandogya Upanishad there is a dialogue between Prajapati on the one hand and Indra and Virochana on the other. Prajapati declared: 'The self is free from sin, free from old age, free from death and grief, free from hunger and thirst. Self is the reality, self is the truth, self is that which we must try to understand.' This declaration was heard by the Devas and the Asuras and both became anxious to know what the self was. The Devas deputed Indra and the Asuras deputed Virochana as their representatives to Prajapati to acquire from him the knowledge of the self. Prajapati explained to them: 'The reflection one sees when looking into another's eye or a pail of water or in a mirror in the waking state is the self.' Virochana in Sanskrit means a man of fashion, a man of the world. He hurried to the Asuras and conveyed to them the message that this body was the self, this was the ultimate reality, and this was also the end.

But Indra was seized with doubts. He argued within himself: 'As self in its reflection in the pail of water looks well adorned when the body is well adorned, well dressed when the body is well dressed, that self will also be blind if the body is blind, lame if the body is lame, crippled if the body is crippled, perish if the body perishes. I see no good in this doctrine.' And so he returned to Prajapati and expressed his doubts. Prajapati knew that Indra was right in doubting whether the body was the self, for the body was perishable while the self was not. And so he poured out unto him the second time: 'One who moves about happily in the dreaming state, seeing without eyes, hearing without ears, smelling without nose, performing all functions without the help of sense-organs, that is the self.'

Indra was again in doubt. Addressing himself, he said: 'Though it is true that in the dreaming state the self does not become blind by the blindness of the body, does not become lame by the lameness of the body, does not get crippled by the crippling of the body, yet it feels as if it were struck in dreams, as if it were chased. It is conscious of pain, sheds tears, and grieves. I see no good in this doctrine.' And so he returned to Prajapati and expressed his doubts. Prajapati told him that he was right in doubting as to whether the one who dreamt was the self. The dreaming state was a state of flux,

a changing state, whereas the self is something permanent, something which imparts stability to changing existence. In order to experience the objects of the world, either in the waking or in the dreaming state, there should be a permanent subject without which one could have no real understanding. The experiences of the waking state as well as of the dreaming state are objects and to impart to them an existential reality there must be a subject. This is so because it is well known that the experience and the experiencer cannot be one and the same.

Moreover, all experiences are momentary. What imparts continuity to these experiences? These experiences of the waking or dreaming states could not be the self and hence Prajapati expounded to Indra: 'When a man goes into a dreamless sleeping state that is the self.' By this statement he tried to convince Indra that the self is that which in the waking state is lost in the things outside by identifying itself with the body and the objects of the world. But in the dreaming state the same extricates itself from the body and the phenomenal world yet still floats about in it with feelings, desires, and passions incidental to the body and mind. This self in the dreamless sleeping state further lays aside the life of objectivity and appears in its subjective form. How is it that after a prolonged dreamless sleep, when we awake we find ourselves linked to the same individuality and associated to the same personality? This continuity of consciousness during the waking, dreaming, and dreamless state is the self. Without this, who is to experience, who is to contemplate? How can the experience exist without the experiencer, or the object without the subject? If an experience is to exist there must be an experiencer; every object in order to subsist must trace its origin to some subject because an object by itself, without a subject to conceive it, is inconceivable. It is this that is the self.

But even this did not satisfy Indra. He argued: 'The self in a dreamless state cannot be said to exist. We know of the self as the knower of the objective world or as an experiencer of feelings and desires. How can we say that the self exists in the dreamless sleeping state when we are not conscious of the world outside nor do we experience feelings and desires as we do in a dream? In the dreamless sleeping state there is no self and so I see no good in this doctrine.' He again returned to Prajapati to express his doubts. Prajapati realising the difficulty of Indra said: 'In a dreamless sleep the self is not annihilated. There is an identity running through the differ-

ences of various experiences. Maghavan! This body is mortal and all is subject to death. It is only an abode of the self, which is the immortal and the bodiless. The self is the person of the eye, the eye itself is only its instrument for seeing; he who smells is the self, the nose is just the instrument of smelling.' In this manner did Prajapati establish the separate and independent existence of the self from the body for the intellectual satisfaction of Indra.

The Superiority of Spiritual Psychology to Material Psychology is Established Through its Pragmatism

Since the beginning of time man has been wandering in search of the ultimate truth regarding the reality of the soul. The world is a sealed dungeon which does not allow the bright and piercing rays of both the before-life and the after-life lamps to come peeping through. Everything is hidden as it were behind an impenetrable veil. Modern psychology acknowledges its helplessness to rend open this veil of ignorance and get a glimpse of the past and a peep into the future. It is thus forced to content itself with playing the role of physical psychology by giving up the pursuit of the unknown and the unknowable and confining its search to behaviour which can be made the subject of observation, experiment, and comparison.

But the spiritual psychology of Vedic teachers never gave up its search for the unknown and continuously engaged itself in its quest for the nature of the mind, consciousness, self, or soul. They realized that the ultimate reality was beyond one's ken, but there was one thing about which they were absolutely certain through their psychological investigations. They asserted with all the strength of emphasis at their command that the body and the soul were two separate entities, each exclusive of the other. Thus the body would be dead without the soul, but the soul, though it lived in the body, would be more than capable of living on and must survive even without the body. Metaphysics apart, this truth, they said, had its own utility even from a practical point of view. After all, utilitarianism is, by itself, one of the tests to find out the truth about any proposition. Practical utility is a factor of vital importance in evaluating the soundness or otherwise of a doctrine. Even for daily and commonplace articles, utility is a test which cannot be ignored. A marble palace of gigantic dimensions, if inhabitable, is worse than a heap of rubbish from which something useful can be sorted out, and even the tiniest things like a needle are sometimes preferred

to gold. It is the pragmatic value of a thing and even of a doctrine that decides its utility or its truthfulness.

Let us see if the theory of the body and the soul being separate and independent entities, irrespective of the fact whether it is true or not, has a practical, utilitarian value. For on this alone will depend the fate of the spiritual psychology we have been trying to expound throughout this chapter.

A close study of Vedic ideology reveals that this theory constituted both the warp as well as the woof which were woven into the fabric of Indian thought. It was not a fantasy of some idle brain or a hair-splitting exercise of armchair metaphysicians. This precept was indelibly stamped on every aspect of Indian life. The four stages in the journey of life that we have mentioned in an earlier chapter, *Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha,* and *Sanyasa* through which one had to pass in the Vedic age were steps in giving a practical shape to this thought. They developed a sense of detachment which was a necessary corollary to the idea of the body and the soul being separate and independent entities. The *Varna* System, by advocating its philosophy of selfish and selfless services to humanity, was also helpful in implementing this detached outlook in society. For what else is the selfless labour of the *Brahmana* and *Kshatriya* if not the outcome of a detached frame of mind? Thus a sense of detachment was developed by the *Ashrama* system in the individual and by the *Varna* system in the social organisation.

This idea is of utmost utilitarian value in our workaday world also. Firstly, the moment we realize that the body, the mind, and the soul are separate entities, the emphasis at once shifts from the body to the mind and soul. The *Mahabharata* says: 'It is not the eye that sees the form and shape but the mind through the eye.'[1] The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says: 'My mind was elsewhere and so I could neither see nor hear.'[2] The Rishis of the Upanishads had opened the eyes of their disciples to the truth that the world was a playground not of the body and the senses but of the mind. They used to keep the disciples in their *Ashramas* for a number of years and guide them through numerous experiences of life to convince

[1] चक्षुः पश्यति रूपाणि मनसा न तु चक्षुषा।
(महाभारत, शान्तिपर्व, ३११-१७)

[2] अन्यत्र मनाभूवम् नादर्शम् अन्यत्र मनाभूवम् नाश्रौषम् ।
(बृहदारण्यक, १-५-३)

them that the root cause of all sorrow and suffering was the mind. The real problem was the mind, not the body, because every pleasure, happiness, and suffering of the mind was only reflected in the body. The *Mahabharata* says: 'The panacea for all suffering is not to think of suffering.'[1] It is the thinking, it is the mind, that aggravates every suffering. The Katha Upanishad says: 'When all the senses are stilled, when the mind is at rest, and the intellect wavers not, then is the highest state attained.'[2]

Material psychology looks at things with the organs of the senses; spiritual psychology tries to gauge them through the instrumentality of the senses but with the organ of the mind. It is this which makes all the difference in their respective outlooks from the standpoint of their utility in our day to day life. Bhagatsingh kissed the noose of the hangman whose rope strangled him to death. Why? He did so because he had imbibed the lesson of spiritual psychology enunciated in the Gita that the body might perish but the soul is immortal. The Gita preaches: 'Sword cannot wound it, fire cannot burn it, water cannot drench it, wind cannot dry it.'[3] Spiritual psychology grapples with the mind, and 'not without but within' is its dictum.

The Gita is an exposition of this truth. The war of the *Mahabharata* between the Kauravas and the Pandavas was fought, no doubt, on the battleground of Kurukshetra. But Shri Krishna transplanted it into the human mind and instead of talking in terms of bloodshed and massacre spoke in the language of the mind. Otherwise, what was the sense of discoursing upon the qualities of a *Sthita-prajnya*, that is, 'a mind in balance' when the war drums were beating and the swords were rattling in their sheaths all around. Shri Krishna knew that wars of the world are fought primarily on the battlefield of the human mind, and so it was in the mind that the two opposing warriors should meet. Jealousy, hatred, violence, germinate in the mind and it is from here that they grow to devastate the world. If the mind is at peace within, the world is at peace without. It is only a disturbed mind that sets the ripples of vice and chaos into motion. It is in this context that Shri Krishna has said

[1] भैपज्यमेतत् दुःखस्य यदेतत् नानुचिन्तयेत् । (महाभारत, शान्तिपर्व, २०५–२)

[2] यदा पन्चावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह ।
बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टते तामाहुः परमां गतिम् ।। (कठ, ६, १०)

[3] अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च । (गीता, २–२३)

in the Gita: 'In the same way as a ship is turned from its course upon the waters by the gales and gusts of wind, even so, how often in life the wandering winds of the senses cast man's mind adrift and turn his better judgement from its course.'[1]

Spiritual psychology circumscribes every human problem within the limits of the mind. And so, most appropriately, Vedic thinkers evolved a system known as *Yoga Darshana* the principal object of which was a masterful control over the mind. *Yoga*, according to this system of philosophy, is a psychological process which channelizes the different desires and tendencies of the mind by giving them a spiritual direction.[2] It is only by these methods that one can be said to have attained complete control over the senses and sense-objects and to have grasped the significance of the Gita which says: 'As water flows continually into the ocean without disturbing it, so also the desire that flows into the mind of the *Yogi* cannot disturb it.'[3]

The first utilitarian value, therefore, of spiritual psychology is the realization of the separateness of the body and the mind, and thereafter to treat every human problem on the plane of the mind. This is the only method to arrive at a lasting solution. Secondly, the spiritual outlook on life is useful in so far as it provides us with a novel, efficient, and peaceful method of living. If man is not only the body, but a body with a soul inhabiting it, then the only correct approach to life should be the one which does not neglect the soul. 'What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul' is a truth that man can ill afford to forget. The body exists and so we have to perform *Karma* to preserve it, but as the body is for the soul, not the soul for the body, our *Karma* must be detached.

Attachment to worldly objects is the logical outcome of the body dominating the soul; when the soul dominates the body non-attachment will inevitably follow. Desires which originate in the mind do so to find their satisfaction in the body on account of its identi-

[1] इन्द्रियाणां हि चरतां यन्मनोऽनुविधीयते ।
तदस्य हरति प्रज्ञां वायुर्नाविमिवाम्भसि ।। (गीता, २–६८)

[2] योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः । (योगदर्शन, १–२)

[3] आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत् ।
तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी ।।
(गीता, २–७०)

fication with the mind. Thus they reflect in the mind a feeling of attachment to worldly objects which is inherent in the body. If, however, a consciousness of their separate existence is awakened and the mind does not identify itself with the body but maintains its independence, all attachment will languish. This is the quintessence of the teaching of the Gita wherein it is called *Karma Yoga* or *Nishkama Karma*. Non-attachment is possible only when the mind, the consciousness, or the soul, by whatever name we may call it, realizes itself to be independent of the body.

Spiritual Outlook on Life

Non-attachment gives a new direction to life. It has two meanings. It means that whilst enjoying the world one should not lose oneself in its sensual pleasures, as one does so, only when the mind becomes a slave to the body, which it is not and should never be allowed to be. Non-attachment also means that while performing one's duty one should leave the result thereof to the powers supreme that preside over the destinies of the world. It is the mind alone that grieves when the expectations are not fulfilled. But why does the mind grieve? Why is it sorrow-stricken? It grieves and sorrows only on account of attachment and expectations. If the mind and soul exist and function independently of the body, they need not and will not grieve. All grief and sorrow are the outcome of the mind and soul identifying themselves with the body and its needs.

Moreover, there is also another reason why the mind should not lament for expectations which are not fulfilled. Why and how should a result which you expect turn out to be as you wish? The performance of an act is within our hands, but its result is beyond our reach. How extensively pervading is the universe, and how many factors are required to come together for the emergence of a result. Some of the factors we know, most of them we do not know. A result is the sum total of all the plus and minus factors put together. It is not we alone that count in the scheme of the world organization and structure. Think how vast is the drama, how small the performance, and how insignificant the actor! Besides ourselves the ocean of humanity has many drops and the doings of each of these are running parallel to ours to be added to or subtracted from the total whole. A result bad for us may be good for others and that which is bad for others may be good for us. Who does all this accounting? We do not do it. Whosoever does it,

He cannot be expected to be partial to us and if He has to be just we cannot but surrender to His judgement. This is the concept of non-attachment embodied in the oft repeated formula of 'not mine, not mine.'

The Upanishads contain innumerable illustrations to prove that the realization of the concept of the body and soul being independent entities was capable of altering the entire outlook on life of the men and women of the Vedic times.

In the Katha Upanishad we come across a dialogue between Yama and Nachiketa in which the latter pleads of the former to initiate him into the secret of divine wisdom. Yama tells that treading the path of the spirit was similar to walking on the edge of a razor blade, and that it was far easier to revel in the luxuries of a worldly life than to pursue the path of the divine. He told Nachiketa that he could replenish him with all the pleasures that the earth contained, but that Nachiketa should not ask him about the spiritual life since it was too, too difficult to lead. Yama offered him ornaments, wealth, land, houses, cows, and everything else that money could buy, but how did Nachiketa, a young man of the Vedic age, respond? He replied: 'All the pleasures of the world are *Shvobhavah*, that is, they exist today and are no more tomorrow. They please the senses but also exhaust them. The span of life is short within which we have to attain the eternal bliss that never fades. Material wealth cannot satisfy the soul.'[1]

Thereupon Yama, pleased with Nachiketa, told him that in life there are two paths, the first leads to present enjoyments (*Preya*) and the second points the way to ultimate bliss (*Shreya*). He continued: 'Thou, O Nachiketa, having looked upon fleshy desires, delightful and pleasing to the senses, hast renounced them all. Thou hast turned from the miry way because thou has disentangled thyself from the worldly objects and hearkened to the inner light or to the life of the spirit. For thee, the gates of joy are open.'[2]

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad there is a dialogue between

[1] श्वोभावा मर्त्यस्य यदन्तिकैतत् सर्वेन्द्रियाणां जरयन्ति तेजः अपि सर्वं जीवितं, अल्पमेव। न वित्तेन तर्पणीयो मनुष्यः। (कठ, १–२७)

[2] अन्यच्छ्रेयोऽन्यदुतैव प्रेयस्ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषं सिनीतः
तयोः श्रेय आददानस्य साधुर्भवति हीयतेऽर्थात् य उ प्रेयो वृणीते।
श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यमेतस्तौ संपदीत्य विविनक्ति धीरः
श्रेयो हि धीरोऽभिप्रेयसो वृणीते प्रेयो मन्दो योगक्षेमाद् वृणीते। (कठ, २–१, २)

Yajnyavalkya and his wife Maitreyee which throws light on the perspective in which life was viewed by the women of the Vedic age. When Yajnyavalkya was on the threshold of retirement from the world and its enjoyments he addressed his wife, saying: 'Let me allot to you the property that I own so that you may live a comfortable life.' How did Maitreyee, the symbol of Vedic womanhood, respond? She asked: 'O Lord, tell me, if the earth were covered with wealth all over and the whole of it were passed on to me as my possession, would I attain divine bliss that one attains by the realization of the soul?' To this Yajnyavalkya replied: 'No, not the spiritual bliss. Wealth is a means to an end, not an end in itself, and by having wealth you will be in possession of a means, and your life will be one as of those who possess means and nothing more. The eternal bliss that I see by renouncing the world is not to be attained by wealth.'[1] Mahatma Gandhi, admonishing the twentieth century man, when he said: 'Self-indulgence leads to destruction, and renunciation to immortality,' echoed the same truths.

Nachiketa and Maitreyee were prototypes of persons brought up upon the milk of Vedic culture. Material progress was not a thing undreamt of in Vedic times, on the contrary, the temptations offered by Yama and Yajnyavalkya to Nachiketa and Maitreyee were those of material prosperity. History is replete with instances of material progress in those times. The only difference compared to the world of today was that Vedic culture, upholding as it did the dual existence of matter and spirit, initially gave every encouragement to advances in the world of matter but finally shifted its emphasis to the realm of the soul. Man and every material progress had to be subservient to the spirit and spiritual progress. Spirit alone was supreme, all else was subordinate. And so it is that neither Western materialism nor Vedic spiritualism neglect the world of matter, but the two part company at the point beyond which the Vedic seers thought that materialism should not be allowed to grip the individual. The world of matter exists, but so does the world of the spirit. And if the spiritual world is there, as it actually does exist beyond a reasonable doubt, the world of matter must neces-

[1] सा होवाच मैत्रेयी, यन्नु म इयं भगो: सर्वा पृथिवी वित्तेन पूर्णा स्यात् कथं तेनामृता स्यामिति, नेति होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यो यथैव उपकरणवतां जीवितम् तथैव ते जीवितं स्यात् अमृतत्वस्य [illegible] वित्तेन ।

(बृहदारण्यकोपनिषद्, २–४–२)

sarily be ranked as being second to it. Thus sang the Vedic bards in the strain: 'So far and no further.' If the spirit or the soul is the ultimate reality, if the body and the material world are only means for the attainment of the power or bliss that is beyond, then the only rational course of behaviour is to treat them as such. Yajnyavalkya asserted that the world of matter and its objects are a means to an end and not ends in themselves. Can a single person even today, brought up in the very cradle of materialism, refute this assertion of Yajnyavalkya? If not, then the only course left open to the modern world is to follow the dictates of the psychology of the soul.

Spiritual psychology led the Vedic Rishis to one stupendous conclusion. They realized that the laws working in the cosmos were the same as those operating in the atom. Swami Vivekananda once asserted that he could see the mighty universe in the tiny atom. Macrocosm was expanded microcosm and microcosm was shrunk macrocosm. In Upanishadic terminology *Pinda* (the body or the material unit) was a small *Brahmanda* (the universe) and *Brahmanda* was a large *Pinda*. This being universally acceptable, if a man was a composite entity made up of two units viz., body and soul, the cosmos must also be a composite entity made up of two units, i.e., the material world and its spiritual counterpart or the Universal Soul. The soul in the body was called *Atma*, the soul in the cosmos was called *Parama Atma*, and as the *Atma* was the master of the body, *Parama Atma* was the master of the universe which it governed.

It is an ideology that moulds the life of an individual and the nation. These spiritual ideals were ingrained into the minds and hearts of the men and women of Vedic times. The ultimate test of any philosophy of life should be whether it offers us satisfaction, happiness, contentment, and peace of mind or whether the reverse is the outcome of our upholding it. In this light it is for us to judge whether the outlook on life as visualized by the Vedic seers is a solution to the ever-increasing problems of the present materialistic age. If it is, let us accept it, if it is not, let us find some other solution; for the current state of affairs has only created new problems and aggravated the old ones.

CHAPTER XII

MATERIALISM VERSUS SPIRITUALISM

WORLD philosophers and thinkers stand arrayed in two opposite camps: the materialists and the spiritualists. Materialism has not been a monopoly of the West nor spiritualism of the East, though an overwhelming number of thinkers of the West lean towards materialism, whilst those of the East try their very best to widen the halo around spiritualism. There are other shades of thinking, no doubt, but they more or less either merge into or emerge from these two basic concepts. Vedic culture, on the other hand, presents a synthesis between materialism and spiritualism. But since it treats the physical world as being subservient to the spiritual, as a means to the realization of the divine ideal, are we not justified in designating it as material spiritualism ?

The materialist thinkers evaluate progress in terms of man's victory over nature. We used to travel by bullock cart, now we travel by cars and aeroplanes; we were accustomed to light the earthen lamp, now we switch on the electric current; it took months for distant travels, now it can be done within a few hours. Thus with the invention of new machines, man has obtained mastery over the erstwhile indomitable forces of nature.

But to the spiritualistic thinkers progress has a different meaning. Here the scoring of victory over nature is replaced by trying to score victory over self. Man succumbs every moment to lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride, jealousy, and finds himself helplessly caught up in their meshes. There are moments when he loses every possible control over himself and is just swept away, as it were, in their overpowering torrential currents. He has no doubt manufactured the car, the aeroplane, discovered electricity, and invented machines which have all enabled him to obtain mastery over nature. But if he uses the car for committing theft, the aeroplane for bombing the innocent and the helpless, the electricity and machines for destructive purposes, what use does he make of this so-called victory? Such a victory would be worse than defeat.

Mastery over Nature or Mastery over Self

Vedic culture seriously engaged itself with this problem. There is

a story in Chhandogya Upanishad (7-2, 3) which illustrates the concern of the Rishi regarding his outlook on life. Narada went to Sanat Kumara and said that he had studied every branch of knowledge, all the four Vedas, delved deeply into every science spanning from the starry heavens to the dusty earth, ignored nothing that was knowable in the world of matter, but he still could not attain peace and tranquillity of mind. He was only a *Mantravid*, or an expert in learningby heart the knowledge contained in words, and not an *Atmavid,* that is, not one who perceived the reality of the self. He knew the outer not the inner, the shell not the substance, the form not the spirit. 'Sire!' said he, 'I have heard from the wise that one who has realized his self attains peace and tranquillity. Initiate me into that wisdom.' [1]

In Katha Upanishad a fable is narrated about Nachiketa who was thirsting for knowledge of the self. His teacher told him to accept worldly objects, i.e., chariots, lands, houses, property, but not to ask for the knowledge of *Atma* for that is the most difficult of all things to obtain. But as Nachiketa was a man of mettle, he refused to accept anything else other than this knowledge. He said that passions, desires, and indulgences were never satisfied even if one were to be born a thousand times in this world, it is only by the realization of the true nature of the self that one can have mastery over the world of matter and sense-perceptions. 'Sire!' said he, 'I want initiation into that wisdom.' [2]

There is another fable illustrative of the same truth narrated in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (2, 4; 1, 2, 3) where an interesting and instructive dialogue takes place between Rishi Yajnyavalkya and his

[1] ऋग्वेदं भगवोऽध्येमि यजुर्वेदं सामवेदमाथर्वणं चतुर्थमितिहासपुराणं
पञ्चमं वेदानां वेदं पित्र्यं राशिं दैवं निधिं वाक्योवाक्यं
एकायतनं देवविद्यां ब्रह्मविद्यां भूतविद्यां क्षत्रविद्यां नक्षत्रविद्यां
सर्वदेवजनविद्यां एतद् भगवोऽध्येमि। सोऽहं भगवो मन्त्रविदेवास्मि नात्म-
विदिति। सोऽहं भगवः शोचामि तं मा भगवान् शोकस्य पारं तारयत्विति।
(छान्दोग्य, ७–२, ३)

[2] ये ये कामा दुर्लभा मर्त्यलोके सर्वान् कामान् छन्दतः प्रार्थयस्व
इमा रामाः सरथाः सतूर्या न हीदृशा लम्भनीया मनुष्यैः।
आभिर्मत्प्रत्ताभिः परिचारयस्व नचिकेतो मरणं मानुप्राक्षीः॥
श्वोभावा मर्त्यस्य यदन्तिकैतत् सर्वेन्द्रियाणां जरयन्ति तेजः
अपि सर्वं जीवितमल्पमेव तवैव वाहास्तव नृत्यगीते॥
न वित्तेन तर्पणीयो मनुष्यो लप्स्यामहे वित्तमद्राक्ष्म चेत्त्वा। (कठ, १-२५, २६, २७)

wife Maitreyee. On the occasion of his entering into *Vanaprastha Ashrama* in which one had to renounce all one's property and possessions, he offered her his property for her future maintenance and well-being. But Maitreyee asked: 'If I were to get as much wealth as is contained in the whole world, shall I be contented and consoled in spirit? Will it lead me to immortality?' To this Yajnyavalkya replied: 'Not so, not so, my dear. In that case you will enjoy such a life as these material means can offer and your pleasures will be like those enjoyed by people dependent upon these means. Wealth will not and cannot give you the eternal peace of the soul.' At this exclaimed Maitreyee: 'Of what avail is that to me which cannot give me peace and tranquillity for ever? These perishable material means, such as wealth, land, house, property, come and go, but if the knowledge of the self offers one eternal peace and harmony I shall have that and not this.'[1]

This does not mean, however, that Vedic culture was not versed in the path to material progress. As we journey along the highways of life we always come to the cross-roads where the path branches off into two different directions, one leading to materialism and the other to spiritualism. The path to material progress is that of scoring victory over nature, the way to worldly pleasures and sensual enjoyments, a pleasing and fascinating mode of behaviour. The path to spiritual progress is the march towards the victory of the soul over matter, difficult to pursue in the beginning but ultimately leading to composure, mental calmness, peace, and tranquillity. Vedic culture designated the former as *Preya* or *Apara* and the latter as *Shreya* or *Para*. *Preya* means that which is dear to the heart, *Shreya* means that which is ultimately good and most beneficial. *Apara* means that which is not beyond and is easy to reach or to grasp, *Para* means that which is distant and difficult to get to or cling to..

Vedic culture was thus well aware of these two paths, but with an experience of thousands of years had come to the inevitable con-

[1] मैत्रेयी इति होवाच याज्ञवल्क्य उद्यास्यन् वा अरे अहमस्मात् स्थानादस्मि। हन्त तेऽनया कात्यायन्याऽन्तं करवाणीति। साहोवाच मैत्रेयी, यन्नु म इयं भगोः सर्वा पृथिवी वित्तेन पूर्णा स्यात् कथं तेनामृता स्यामिति। नेति होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यः। यथैव उपकरणवतां जीवितं तथैव ते जीवितं स्यात्। अमृतत्वस्य तु नाशास्ति वित्तेन इति। सा होवाच मैत्रेयी, येनाहं नामृता स्याम् किमहं तेन कुर्याम्।
(वृहदारण्यक, २–४ ; १, २, ३)

clusion that *Preya* and *Apara* must lead to *Shreya* and *Para.* The material must be subservient to the spiritual, for therein lies the deliverance of mankind from the sorrow and the suffering of the world. The path leading to materialism was thus not unknown to Vedic culture. It was called *Apara Vidya* or *Preya Marga.* The Vedic seers were fully aware that this path offers enjoyment of the world of matter and pleasure of the senses, it offers pride of glory and victory over nature. Hence they encouraged travel along this path only so far as *Apara* led to *Para,* upto the point at which the *Preya* initiated an urge for the *Shreya,* and the hitherto dominant material led to the awakening of the dormant spiritual.

The world today is speeding headlong in its triumphant march for gaining victory over nature, but could not the exponents of Vedic culture also have taken recourse to the same road? They started on the journey of life much earlier than their fellowmen. They had known material abundance and exuberance of worldly gains. But having enjoyed all that the world of matter and sense-objects could offer, they still renounced this path and knowingly took a different and more difficult road to reach the hidden treasures of spiritualism. They realized that though this material path enthrones man as an uncrowned king of all creation, it still makes him poor in the realm of the spirit. 'What doth it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul' depicts the ideal of Vedic culture. After all, for what purpose should one open the bowels of the earth and explore its riches, and should the atom bomb be manufactured only for humanity to stock pile?

Riches of the world and energy released from atomic exploration can serve mankind for good or evil. If for evil, they deserve to be discarded; if however they do some good, then in the words of Yajnyavalkya they should give man only such pleasure as an implement or a tool can extend to him. How long can an implement be expected to hold out its satisfying capacity or retain its utility? It can give a temporary satisfaction similar to the relief that one can obtain in an emergency case with the help of first-aid equipment. But Maitreyee wanted a lasting solution to man's basic urges in exactly the same manner as all humanity desires. Those responsible for Vedic culture knew well that if they applied their minds to material progress they could make bountiful nature yield her hidden treasures under the yoke of their exploitation. But they forsook this path with full knowledge and understanding that though attractive

and enchanting, yet it did not lead to eternal happiness. Man has been wandering since the beginning of creation to find the bliss that never fades and beatitudes that never wane. Can this all-time urge find satisfaction only in our pure and simple material well-being?

Man has to decide wherein lies his ultimate good. Shall he pile up in a Himalayan heap the contents drawn out of the entrails of nature to feel satisfaction in this glorious deed? Should he surround himself with tools of sensual pleasure and indulge in them with a total abandon of all else? Does his good and betterment lie in this? Or, is it to be found in his pensive, silent cogitations as to what he is, wherefrom he comes, whither he goes, what is his destiny, what is the purpose for which the world exists? Are the world of matter and sense-objects essentially his means or are they an end in themselves? Vedic culture had given serious thought to these problems. It came to the conclusion that it was good to unravel the mysteries of nature and to score victory over them but to continue to grapple with nature to the utter forgetfulness of the world beyond was disastrous. The true path for a soul's salvation lay in self-realization rather than in the subjugation of nature and its forces.

What are the means for self-realization? Vedic culture had laid down five touchstones to testify whether any given way of life fulfilled the requisite conditions for the development of the soul. The Vedic seers were convinced that it was spiritualism that passed these five tests, whereas materialism failed. What are these five tests? *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Satya* (truthfulness), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Brahmacharya* (self-control), and *Aparigraha* (dispossession) are the granite bedrocks on the foundation of which the citadel of Vedic culture rests. An individual, a society, a nation, building itself on the base of these five principles, holds itself high and is never shaken either by spiritual earthquakes or swept away by material tornadoes. Whenever and wherever these principles are lost sight of, the hungry wolves of degeneration and degradation enter in stealthily to snatch away their preys. Thus for the upkeep of spiritualism these five tests are eternal verities, though for materialism they are of doubtful certitude. Doubtful because materialism does not fully accept and yet does not deny their worth. Why does it accept their worth, why does it not totally deny it? This is so because truth from its very nature must manifest itself as surely as light must appear piercing the densest darkness. The Vedic hymn says: 'The face of

truth is masked by the covering of gold,'[1] but how long can the clouds keep off the rays of the sun? The sun scatters the darkest mist, and from over the hills one can behold the rays of spiritual wisdom dawning upon the doubting world.

Let us now study these five spiritual principles, which lie as bedrocks under the cultural edifice raised by the Vedic builders.

Ahimsa or Non-Violence

The very first of these principles is *Ahimsa* or non-violence. What do we see in nature? They call it the law of the jungle. The greater, the fitter, the stronger, tries to eliminate the smaller, the less fit, the weaker. The philosophy of 'might is right' holds its sway in the lower stages of evolution. This principle operates universally among plants, trees, insects, fish, birds, and animals. Evolutionists call it the principle of struggle for existence in which the weaker must be driven to the wall. Indian sociologists designated it as *Matsya Nyaya* or the law of the fish in which the bigger fish devour the smaller one. This is what Tennyson, the English poet-laureate, meant when he looked at 'Nature red in tooth and claw.'

Materialists think that this law of nature holding amongst animals is also applicable to man. When nature through the process of struggle for existence is continuously eliminating the weaker elements, why should not man also walk in her footsteps for what is he, if not a rational animal? This trend of thought has given rise to the idea of a biological necessity for war. It is only the strong individual, the strong society, the strong nation, and the strong country that have a right to survive, the weak must disintegrate.

This accounts for the historical records of stronger nations having subjugated the weaker ones. The past of mankind is full of incessant struggles and wars between nations and nations or countries and countries. The Germans thought that they were the fittest in the world to survive and hold dominions under their sway. German philosophers turned out volume upon volume of literature pouring out to their fellow countrymen the ideology of war being an inevitable and unavoidable compulsion of nature from which there was no escape. All this culminated in the two most destructive world wars whereby the blood of millions of innocent men, women, and

[1] हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।
तत्त्वं पूपन् अपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ।। (ईशावास्य, १५)

children was shed. Even today there are moments when mankind finds itself to be standing on the very brink of the darkened river of destruction. And the leaders themselves are in a suspense whether to let humanity take a dive forward or to induce it to turn its back on the engulfing waters of extinction. The evolutionary ideas of struggle for existence and survival of the fittest gave rise to vast colonial empires and subordinated colonies.

But Vedic culture refused to accept the hypothesis that the law of the fish and fowl, the law of the animal, or the law of the jungle could and should be allowed to determine the fate of man and human society. Man is not only a rational animal standing on the very top of the spiral staircase of evolution, but he is also an embodiment of certain spiritual instincts. Hence he cannot look upon the fish and fowl who are devoid of these very elements to be his inspirers in the framing of laws. Not only this, but even whilst grading or evaluating the different breeds existant among a certain species of animals, what is it that we look for? In the words of Confucius: 'Even a steed is not prized for its strength but for its thoroughbred quality.'

Moreover, what is a law? Law is any principle which if made universal can hold good. Can the principle of survival of the fittest hold good and true if its application were made universal? Who is fit and who is unfit? Who is strong, who is weak? These words are relative. One declared the fittest amongst some may be the most unfit when compared to others, and with the passing of time the strongest can and very often does turn into the weakest. Further, if only the fit and the strong have a right to survive can this principle be universalized? In that case only one nation would have a right to exist and even here only one man would have the right to live. This, of course, is only the carrying of an advocated code of conduct to its logical conclusion. Can such an absurd principle be accepted as a beacon light by the rays of which humanity should be required to steer its ship?

There have been efforts made for the propagation of this blind, inhuman, and rigid principle by countries and nations under the rule of dictators. But they have always proved ultimately abortive and even if they succeeded for a time, reaction immediately set in. The law of fish and fowl did not ever appeal to the intelligentsia, though it may have made a current hit with the ignorant. There was a time when kings and emperors ruled the world by violence.

Those days are over. Time comes when dictators appear on the stage with war and victory as their slogans, but their days are also numbered.

Violence may be the law of nature which is blind, it is not the law of the spirit. Why does violence appear and disappear? Violence is an outcome of the particular materialistic trend of thought. Vedic culture believes that the world of matter exists subservient to the world of the spirit. As the material world is all that is visible to the eye, violence seems to prevail everywhere. But the material is only the temporary, the everlasting and the ultimate is the spiritual. The material manifests itself, man lingers in it for a time, but pass off it must, as it is only a ladder for climbing into the loft of the spiritual. Violence is the law of nature, of the material world, but not of man, or of the spiritual world. Non-violence is the rule of law in the realm of the spirit.

It is generally thought that to kill an animal for eating its flesh, to commit murder for any reason whatsoever, or to be engaged in unjustifiable warfare are some of the grossest forms of violence. But Vedic culture understood violence in a much wider sense. The feelings of divergence, disunity, separateness, I-ness, my-ness, that set man against man and nation against nation, are the finer forms of violence. They tend to lead ultimately to the division of mankind into opposing groups which come into conflict with one another. They give rise to ill will, jealousy, and hatred. To live and let others live for us is violence, to live and let others live for themselves is non-violence.

Non-violence is not confined to letting others live for themselves, it also means that one should be ready to sacrifice one's self to save others. The compulsion applied on others to lay down their lives for the sake of ourselves is the blind law of nature, of fowls and fishes. But the laying down of one's own life in a time of need to save the lives of others is the law of the man who takes inspiration from the spirit. The violence visible in nature is to awaken the reaction in the divine nature of man to find fulfilment in non-violence; for if violence were not stalking about nakedly all around, it would not stir up reactionary forces against it.

Does not this spiritual truth manifest itself from time to time in the world? Does not the world commemorate and worship the heroes and martyrs who have laid down their lives for others? Have they not attained immortality through death? Does not

violence itself proclaim at its loudest that non-violence and non-violence alone is the indomitable law? Did not mankind repent for ages, after having put Christ on the cross by raising churches in his honour? Did not those who consigned the living body of Bruno to the flames raise statues in his memory? Did not Dayanand immortalize himself by saving the life of the one who poisoned him to death? Did not Gandhi sacrifice his life so that non-violence may shine out and join the galaxy of the deathless? Despite all our flaming speeches about violence, despite our witnessing so much of it in nature, man, and society, the strain sung by Vedic bards still continues to pour forth its enchanting music. And we see that the whole trend of creation is from violence to non-violence, from disunity to unity, from manifoldness to oneness, from jealousy, ill will, and hatred to mutual understanding, goodwill, and love. And on witnessing all this, one can only say that the foundation of the universe does not rest on violence but on non-violence, not on material but on spiritual phenomenon. Even those who swear by nature do not scan her processes with open eyes for even here lurking behind the veil of violence is non-violence ready to be unmasked.

Mahatma Gandhi made an extraordinary experiment with his philosophy of non-violence. He said that in a quarrel, we forget that the evil and the evil-doer are not one and the same. While resisting evil we must not have any ill will towards the evil-doer. We may even try for the love of the evil-doer to force him to renounce the evil. In such a quarrel there is no malice, no bickering. Problems take a turn for the worse only when jealousy, hatred, and ill will coat the cause of the conflict with their venomous poison. If we can look at a thing by separating the evil from the evil-doer, in other words, objectively and not subjectively, all personal elements which cause emotional outbursts, thus vitiating relations between the parties to the dispute, disappear. Bitterness, acrimony, enmity, hatred are impulses of the mind and they flare up when they meet with their like. Anger accelerates anger but subsides if confronted with quietitude and calmness. Hatred met with love, revenge with forgiveness, ill will with goodwill, cry a halt to the ferocious vehemence of these passions. A raging fire is extinguished by the continuous pourings of cold water.

Mahatma Gandhi gave a practical shape to this ideology. He said that he loved the English people for their wisdom and bravery but was opposed to their policy of exploitation. He raised the banner

of revolt against them not as a nation but as policy makers. This is the reason that though they left India after a rule of 150 years there was no trace of ill will behind. The last battle in the history of India's freedom movement was fought by Mahatma Gandhi which can rightly be described as the victory of non-violence over violence. To the sceptic, violence can be met only by violence, but according to the Vedic seers, anger is conquered by tranquillity, vice by virtue, niggardliness by generosity, hatred by love, and untruth by truth.[1] Is it not an irony of fate that the world in spite of being a witness to these truths continuously manifesting themselves and capturing their due places in the annals of history is still hesitant to accept them?

Satya or Truthfulness

The second principle which is the touchstone of spiritual awakening is *Satya* or truthfulness. We have seen how it is that in the midst of violence, one solitary call of non-violence prevails sufficiently to turn the tide of events. Similarly, though apparently untruth seems to be universal yet it is in the darkest era of untruth that the light of truth manifests itself. But there is one subtle difference between non-violence and truth.

We hear, in this dense materialism, voices raised against non-violence but even gross materialists do not advocate untruth. The reason is that truth is the very emblem of the spirit, whereas non-violence is only its attribute. The spirit has involved itself so much in the world of matter and sense-objects that its real nature cannot but be lost sight of. When it disengages itself from the involvements in the world it appears as the truth. The Veda has declared: 'O sustainer of the universe, remove the veil of *Maya* that is hiding the face of reality behind to enable me to see the truth.'[2] To see truth face to face is to see reality. At another place, the Veda says: 'Law (*Rita*) and truth (*Satya*) were the first manifestations of the initial effort of the Divine.'[3]

Though truth is the reality yet the very nature of materialism compels it to obstruct the path of truth. Its most inherent tendency is to fight against spiritualism. This is the reason for materialism,

[1] अक्रोधेन जयेत्क्रोधं असाधुं साधुना जयेत् ।
जयेत्कदर्यं दानेन सत्येनालीकवादिनम् ।। ((सुभाषितरत्नभाण्डागारम्)

[2] तत्त्वं पूषन् अपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये । (यजु, ४०–१५)

[3] ऋतं च सत्यं चाभीद्धात्तपसोऽध्यजायत । (ऋक्, १०–१९०–१)

despite vociferously upholding the cause of truth, to lead towards untruth. We live a life of affectation and try to appear what we are not. Nobody wants his real self to be revealed. The exploiter of the poor parades himself as the benefactor of society, a great debauchee puts on the appearance of a saint, a liar all his life will stake his all to prove that he has never told a lie. All this dissimulation persists because our precept and practice are at variance. We shudder to see what lies within ourselves. If we could turn our inside out we would refuse to accept it as our own. Our private life and public life are poles asunder. We have developed a philosophy of our own to the effect that our private life is our individual concern and no one has a right to question it. What holds good regarding the individual holds equally true for the society. As the individual is hesitant to reveal his real nature, nations and countries also try to conceal what they actually are. Politics has developed into the art of the concealment of reality. A politician is one who knows the art of never uttering a word of what he means and never giving a shape to what he utters.

Why does all this happen? It happens because despite the fact that we uphold the banner of truth, the overpowering weight of materialism keeps us cabined, cribbed, and confined to its narrow selfish ends. But can truth be suppressed by our narrow perceptive vision? Truth by its very nature shines like the sun. How long can the sun be expected to hold back its rays from peeping through the cloudy veils? Untruth exists in the world, no doubt, but how long can it survive? It cannot be a workable proposition. Falsehood dominates only so long as we do not know that it is the untruth. The moment its real nature is revealed, it must vanish, and not vanish alone, but be vanquished by the warrior of truth. Do we go in for a counterfeit coin? Nobody ever touches it once it is known that it is not genuine. When *Atma tattva* involves itself in the world of matter and sense-objects, falsehood and untruth overpower it, when it creeps out of the shell of cant and hypocrisy, it comes into its own. 'Lead me from falsehood to truth, from unreal to real,' saith the Vedic scripture.[1] Christ gave vent to the same feelings when he said: 'Ye shalt know the truth and the truth shalt set you free.'

The place that light occupies in the physical world is occupied

[1] अनृतात्सत्यमुपैमि ।

by truth in the spiritual world. Light can be clouded by mist for some time, but its penetrating rays dissipate the mist to enable it to shine forth in all its radiant splendour. Truth, likewise, may remain concealed, but only for a while. Truth is the very essence of the spirit. The eternal conflict between spirit and matter, between light and darkness, is the conflict between truth and falsehood. Light being physical can be extinguished, though its own inherent nature and human necessity will cause its re-appearance. But truth, being non-physical and being the essence of the spirit, can remain hidden for a time only but it cannot be totally extinguished. It is thus, we find, that where the dark shades of falsehood are the deepest, penetrating rays of truth come peeping in. Do we not witness in our own life that despite myriad obstacles even one small facet of truth attracts the human heart far more than a huge granite boulder of untruth? It is in the very nature of light to shine and of truth to manifest itself. 'Truth triumphs, not untruth,'[1] has been the age-old declaration of Vedic culture. We think Shakespeare's dictum of 'Put out the light, and then put out the light' can completely capture the finale of this section. For it is only when one will be able to prevent the sun and the moon from radiating their light on the universe that the world will be able to blot out the light of truth shining in the hearts of all mankind.

Asteya or Non-Stealing

The third essential principle of spiritualism is non-stealing. Nobody will deny that stealing is a vice, but that non-stealing is a virtue, very few will agree to and accept. The English language has no word equivalent to *Asteya*, and hence we have translated it as non-stealing. In the light of Vedic culture, we are all guilty of stealth because every one of us is anxious, at some time or other, by fair means or foul, to covet and possess what belongs to others.

'You cannot worship both God and Mammon,' says the Bible, but we have obliterated the distinction between the two as Mammon has become our only God. Everybody is in the race for money and devises ways and means to procure and hoard it. Accumulation and concentration of wealth in a few hands only widens the gulf of disparities between the rich and the poor. There are some people who do not know what to do with their money, there are others who

[1] सत्यमेव जयते नानृतम् । (मुण्डकोपनिषद्, ३–६)

know not what it is to have two meals a day. As the coin has assumed immense power, the contagion of acquiring it has spread far and wide. Every one is inclined to turn into a thief or a pick-pocket in his own way and in his little sphere. So the number of diseases increases with the swelling of the ranks of medical practitioners; litigation flourishes with the increasing number of persons entering the legal profession; crimes multiply with the police force augmented. Our hands are not in our pockets but in those of our neighbours; we are being cheated but in turn we also are no less cheats. And thus it was that Confucius said: 'The higher man seeks all that he wants in himself, the inferior man seeks his wants from others.'

Society also is not free from the vice of stealing. Nations and countries vie with one another in the race for aggrandisement. In pre-historic times when people could plunder and loot they did so without any qualms of conscience. But with robbery and pillage becoming abominable, the topmost plunderers styled themselves as kings and emperors. When one is not content with what one has and tries to usurp the belongings of others by treachery, if possible, and even by force, if necessary, it is called *Steya* or stealing in Vedic terminology. This is a deep rooted materialistic malady both in the individual as well as the society which Vedic culture had to contend against.

In the opinion of Vedic seers the materialistic citadel is without any solid foundation like the house that was built on the sand by the sea; so how can it stand up and resist the forceful surges that assail it? The moment materialism asserts itself, a self-contradictory reaction sets in. Was not Socialism born out of Capitalism to remedy its very evils and do not both of them negate each other? Materialism also leads to spiritualism as its ultimate contradiction. All disparities, economic or social, are due to the materialistic way of life; spiritualistic interpretation does away with these differences and sees humanity as one. There are two currents underlying each and every outlook on life: either we are concerned with the thought as to how to obtain or grab the belongings of others, or all our pleasure lies in parting with what is ours so as to bring some ray of happiness into the lives of the needy. This is the difference between *Steya* (stealing) and *Asteya* (not only non-stealing but also giving with pleasure). Is it not a fact that individuals and societies committing theft and robbery do not like to be branded as guilty of that offence? Why is it so? It is so because the foundation on which the

world rests is contentment and not greed, non-stealing and not stealth, equality and not difference.

The tendency for greed and misappropriation, which is a ramification of theft, is encouraged by the prevalent philosophy of bringing about an increase in wants which is said to operate as a stimulus to civilization. Wants no doubt are the keynotes for production, but the music of production must end with the melody of an equitable distribution. But an increase in prosperity on account of an augmented production does not necessarily bring in as its corollary an equitable distribution, and very often the universal well-being is sacrificed for the individual well-being. The logical outcome of this is a series of social disturbances in the form of over production, strikes, lockouts, and employer-employee conflicts. We do not suggest that wants should be so reduced as to kill the initiative for industrial progress in society. But to go on indiscriminately increasing wants, both necessary and imaginary, will and does create economic complexities culminating in different crimes and social disorganisation.

The founders of Vedic culture believed in the discharging of debts instead of usurpation. We should owe nothing to others, and if we do owe, the debt should be repaid and not allowed to continue in our account. By debt they did not mean the debt in the form of money alone. As regards money, they had no problems for they were free from greed and aggrandisement. Theft was the rarest crime. They did not spend all their time only in enjoying the luxuries of the world. Their values were different. A king named Ashvapati Kaikeya speaks of his kingdom as follows in the Upanishad: 'There is not a thief in my domain.'[1] Today when everybody is a thief in one sense or the other we are astonished at such a statement, but we forget that the rampant committing of theft is only the result of a particular outlook on life. If the aim of life is only to increase physical wants and then try to seek the means for their satisfaction, if physical needs are the sole wants a man is supposed to have, then plunder and pillage will be the most dominant factors in the prevailing social code of conduct. Vedic culture valued money only to the extent to which it served as a means for the satisfaction of legitimate physical desires, and hence it was not carried away with the mania for its accumulation. Megasthenes who visited India at

[1] न मे स्तेनो न कदर्यो न मद्यपः ।
नानाहिताग्निर्नाविद्वान् न स्वैरी स्वैरिणी कुतः ।। (छान्दोग्य, ५–११–५)

the time of Chandragupta mentioned that the residents of this land did not lock their doors at night. Only the rays of the moon came silently peeping in into their rooms.

If economically they were so contented, what did they mean by debt? They classified debt into three categories, namely, *Pitri Rina, Deva Rina, Rishi Rina.* Our parents gave us birth, so by entering a householder's life we also should continue the progeny and thus discharge the debt we owe to our parents. This was called *Pitri Rina. Rina* means the debt, *Pitri* means the parents. What was *Deva Rina*? Our teachers lived in *Ashramas* by renouncing the worldly life, and attaining the status of *Devas* imparted us knowledge, hence we should also walk into their footsteps and spend a valuable part of our life in the service of society. This was discharging the *Deva Rina.* What was *Rishi Rina*? The *Devas* by entering *Sanyasa* or total renunciation took to a nomadic life, never remaining permanently in any one place, and carried the message of spiritual light from home to home, thus devoting themselves to the service of mankind. They put the whole world under their debt. We should also follow into their footsteps and thus relieve ourselves of the debt we owe them. This was called freedom from *Rishi Rina. Pitri* stands for *Grihastha, Deva* for *Vanaprastha,* and *Rishi* for *Sanyasa Ashrama.* All these *Ashramas* were meant as occasions to do service to our fellowmen. Thus moving from the narrow to a wider sphere one learnt, in a practical way, the lesson of overcoming covetousness and greed which prompt a person to possess what does not belong to him.

Besides these three debts by the discharge of which one gave one's best to society, there were five other necessary givings enjoined upon every householder designated as *Grihastha.* But *Grihastha* itself was one of the first vital institutions in life where one really learnt to give, and not give alone but to give and share everything with love and understanding. These five compulsory givings during the *Grihastha* stage were called the five *Yajnyas.* We need not go into the details of the *Yajnyas,* but their quintessence is to give, to surrender, to sacrifice.

Thus the men and women of Vedic times gave their all to society by the discharge of the three *Rinas* or debts and by the performance of the five *Yajnyas.* How could one think of greed and its attendant evils in the Vedic society based on the principles of self-sacrifice? The banners of materialism wave towards possession, those of spiritualism towards dispossession. The development and expansion

is the essence of *Brahmacharya*. This only means that to withdraw oneself from the shallowness of sensual pleasures with a conscious effort is self-control. But self-control does not confine the spirit to a simple withdrawal, rather it encourages it thereafter to move in the right direction. It is not in the nature of man to remain contented with smallness. The individual is at first attracted to any pleasure, even though it be the smallest, but after experiencing it, he begins to feel its smallness and shallowness; and so he moves on to seek a greater and deeper one, more precious to the soul. Yes, an ant greedily sticks to a lump of clay having some particles of sugar, but speedily rejects it as soon as it has had its taste and moves on in search of some other stuff that may taste sweeter. Similarly man spends all his life seeking pleasure in the world of matter and sense-objects, but finding it always and everywhere in small measure, his search for everlasting happiness remains a chimera. Vedic Aryans declared that the objects of the world themselves proclaimed the shallowness of their contents. There was a sound vibrating from every stick and stone that 'happiness eternal did not reside in *Alpa* or the finite, it resided in *Bhooma* or the infinite.'[1] The outlook on life that urges man to progress from the finite to the infinite, from smallness to greatness, from *Atma* to *Brahma*, is *Brahmácharya.*

One who has set himself on the road to greatness has necessarily to curb and control his senses. Sense-objects keep one confined and imprisoned in their small circumference. But to shake off their shackles, to get out of narrowness and to enter into the greatness of the spirit is *Brahmacharya*, which has been described in the Upanishads as *Aham Brahmasmi*, that is, I am not small but great. In this sense *Brahmacharya* means the control of the five senses. Thus it follows that not to indulge in gratifications enjoyed by the senses of perception, sound, smell, taste, and touch is *Brahmacharya* or self-control. A *Brahmachari* or a disciple was exhorted by his *Guru* not to eat too much, not to sleep too much, not to overdo anything in general.

Besides this, the word *Brahmacharya* was used in a narrow sense also. The fundamental urge which dominates all living creatures is the sex instinct. If self-control means the control of the senses or passions, checking the sex instinct is an important form of self-control. In other words, *Brahmacharya* means the control of the sex instinct.

[1] नाल्पे सुखमस्ति भूमा वै सुखम्। (छान्दोग्य, २३–१)

There are materialistic philosophers who quote Freud and other psycho-analysts to prove that a desire unfulfilled is driven into the unconscious. And instead of being suppressed it becomes active and appears in disguised forms in the conscious affecting the behaviour of the individual. But what are the desires which manifest themselves in this way? It is true that a desire which we suppress not because we think it inwardly in our conscience to be wrong, but because we are afraid of its fulfilment or manifestation by the conventions of social inhibitions, and which we nevertheless continue to cherish in our hearts shows itself in our abnormal behaviour. When such a desire is suppressed we nurse it in our hearts and in a manner that society may not know it. Such an unfulfilled desire is like the steam which is not finding an outlet. And, as pent up steam forces its way out by breaking open the lid of the container that covers it, so does any suppressed desire of the nature described above throw the mind out of gear.

Vedic culture accepted the truth of this fact. It stated that, even far away in forests, a person's mind may be infected or tormented by sensual desires.[1] But if one realized in his conscience, by reason of his self-conviction and not due to the fear of society, that the desire he entertained was going to do him and him alone harm, would he not empty out the vessel of water that would generate the steam? Thus he would prevent any further growth or manifestation of abnormality. Moreover, even Freud never advocated to let instincts, impulses, and passions run riot. He also advocated the sublimation of desires.

From this point of view *Brahmacharya* was a method of sublimation of the sex instinct. A *Brahmachari* or the disciple of a *Guru* was exhorted to be engaged all the time in his waking hours in some sort of physical, mental, or spiritual task. He had no leisure to be disturbed by the thoughts of sex. Rishi Dayanand, a great *Brahmachari* of the modern age, was asked by Shri Keshab Chandra Sen if he was ever disturbed by the thoughts of sex. He replied that he was so much occupied with work that the deity of sex might have come and knocked at his door, but finding him engaged must have returned disappointed.

In fact, the sex instinct in itself is not as irresistible as it is forced to become on account of the social environment in which we live

[1] वनेऽपि रागाः प्रभवन्ति रागिणाम्। (शान्तिशतकम्, २–२५)

and labour. Picture the stage of the modern world on which man is a player; surrounded with obscene, lustful scenes everywhere, love songs relayed from radio stations and wafted across the wind to reach every ear, and immodest nudity parading as the latest fashion. Why then should not sex dominate in such an abnormal atmosphere? Moreover, have we ever cared to look after the interests of the younger generation? We talk of discipline, of building up of character, and the maintaining of purity of life. Is such an environment congenial to the growth of personal or national character?

Propounders of Vedic culture had planned out a way of life under which a boy at the tender age of seven years was kept under the watchful care of an experienced teacher or a *Vanaprastha* who had passed through the vicissitudes of life. And having renounced the world he now dedicated himself to the single task of looking after the youth of the nation. A student was called a *Brahmachari*. The very word constantly brought home to his mind that he was with his *Guru* for being trained in self-control, in self-discipline, in character building, and could not afford to idle away his time in wasteful leisure. A young man with such a training looked upon every woman younger than himself as his daughter, equal to his age as his sister, and an older one as his mother.

Such an idealism may be laughed at by urchins of the modern age who fall into Platonic reveries at the sight of an innocent girl. Materialistic outlook has made them incapable of knowing or thinking any better. In the *Ramayana* there is the episode of Ravana having forcibly carried away Sita to his citadel in Lanka. On her way she is said to have dropped off some of her ornaments which were picked up by Sugreeva. When Rama and Lakshmana met Sugreeva and asked him if he knew the whereabouts of Sita, he showed those ornaments to Rama and enquired if they belonged to his wife. Rama asked his brother Lakshmana if he recognised them. What did Lakshmana reply? He is reported to have said that he never looked at the face of Sita, he always knelt down at her feet for Namaskar and, therefore, he could recognise only the ornaments worn on the feet and not on the face.[1] There might be an exaggeration in this poetic description but the very ideal depicted represents

[1] नाहं जानामि केयूरे नाहं जानामि कुण्डले।
नूपुरे त्वभिजानामि नित्यं पादाभिवन्दनात् ।।
(वाल्मीकि रामायण, किष्किन्धा काण्ड, ६, २२–२३)

the difference between the material and the spiritual outlook with regard to sex. The echoes of this Vedic ideal reverberate in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, 5-28) wherein Christ exhorts his disciples saying: 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.'

There is a wild propaganda for birth-control all over the world. It is said that population is increasing in geometrical progression while food production is stepping up only in arithmetical progression. This is called population explosion and governments are spending huge sums to meet this threat by devising artificial contrivances to control the birth rate. Clinics are being opened and seminars held to popularize birth-control methods. But does anybody ever talk of self-control which is the surest and the safest way for a check on population? It is taken for granted that the sex urge is beyond restraint and consequently a lustful life is the inevitable lot of man. There is no doubt that the sexy atmosphere in which we live blots out all thoughts of self-control and so other methods have to be devised for the limitation of the family. These other methods will check the rapid increase of population. But the elimination of one evil will only lead to its replacement by another because a free-licence in sexual indulgence will now emerge to be the vogue of the times. Vedic culture disapproved of this and advocated the awakening of the consciousness of self-control even in married life. It is true that the life of *Brahmacharya* may not be feasible for all, but the indiscriminate way in which contraceptive methods are being sponsored and advocated for free use is bound to create promiscuity and damage the sense of morality. In order to remedy this evil young men should be imbued with a feeling of self-control, so that with the introduction of the contrivances of family planning, morals may not degenerate.

Moreover, family planning and birth-control lay emphasis on only one aspect of the problem. The more fundamental issue facing the world today is not to limit the number but to improve the quality and texture of the social fabric. A Sanskrit poet has well said: 'With one offspring to her credit the lioness sleeps fearless; with a litter of ten the she-ass is destined for nothing but to carry burden.'[1]

[1] एकेनैव सुपुत्रेण सिंही स्वपिति निर्भयम् ।
सहैव दशभिः पुत्रैः भारं वहति गर्दभी ॥

(सुभाषितरत्नभाण्डागारम्, सत्पुत्रप्रशंसा, ८)

Vedic culture was more concerned about the quality of the progeny rather than limiting the number of men and women. The Vedic outlook was eugenic so as to enable the offspring to be healthy and sound in body, mind, and spirit. It was with this object in view that a system of *Sanskaras* for the moulding and formation of the individual was introduced. The world today, no doubt, needs a limitation of the family, but a more imperative need of the hour is to bring into being and rear up better men and better women which was the spiritual ideal aimed at by the sociologists of Vedic times. We have referred to this aspect of the problem in an earlier chapter.

Aparigraha or Dispossession

The fifth constructional material that goes into the building of the spiritual edifice is *Aparigraha* or dispossession. *Pari* means to enclose around; *graha* means to hold. *Parigraha* means to hold around tightly; *Aparigraha* means to loosen the hold.

Entrenched in a life of sense-indulgence, seated in a chamber surrounded with worldly objects scrutinizing them to make an inventory, how often are we not watchful lest some other come to snatch them away from us! Think of the toil and sweat which is put into the acquisition of material wealth and the fervour with which it is clung to. But is it possible to hold on to and be possessed of the world of matter and sense-objects for all times? The very nature of sensual attachment is automatic detachment and renunciation after gratification. Polarization is a spiritual process, it is the law of the spirit. We have referred to it as 'Enjoyment-Renunciation' in a previous chapter. Hatred for carnality is born out of our indulgence in sense-objects. Vedic culture believed neither in pure spiritualism nor in gross materialism, it was a synthesis of both, a material spiritualism, i.e., a philosophy of realism or the acceptance of the world as it is. So it advocated a scheme of life which encouraged enjoyment of sense-objects followed by their renunciation, for this is the reality of life and of the world at large. This spiritual outlook was called *Aparigraha* or dispossession.

We are born into the world and we find it full of thrills, animation, and fascination. So why should we not enjoy it? But whilst sipping the nectars of pleasure and enjoyment we find that with each sip the sweetness appears to diminish, and it is not too long before we say to ourselves: 'enough and no more.' But the after-flavour of sweetness can and does very often continue to itch in the throat and

this can only be remedied by the cool clear water of non-attachment and renunciation. And so it is that after a time everything in the world of matter becomes stale and insipid and the 'within of ourselves' cries out, 'lead me to the well whose water may quench my thirst permanently.' In fact, this pattern of behaviour is quite a regular one with each and everyone of us despite the fundamental difference in the materialistic and spiritualistic outlooks. Hence while in the former the sense-pleasures forsake us and we still pursue them, in the latter we forsake them (sense-pleasures) consciously and voluntarily knowing as we do the dual nature of the world of matter and sense-objects in the form of existence and non-existence.

Fulfilment of life lies in synthesizing both aspects of the reality. *Vedic culture does not plead for the denial of earthly pleasures,* it only cautions against shutting one's eyes to their fleeting nature. Thus it goes that to enjoy the world but not to be lost in it, to drop it ere it drops us, to pass through it but not to stay in it is the essence of the Vedic teaching. If the objects of the world and their pleasures are not to remain permanently with us, as ultimately they have to be abandoned, the only question calling for our decision is: shall we renounce them voluntarily, with pleasure, with our own will, or be cast away by them when nature makes us unfit and incapable of enjoyment? 'With will or without will,' that is the only question, for leave them we must one day or the other. This synthetic outlook covered the Vedic way of life which was divided into four *Ashramás* about which we have already written in a previous chapter. The ultimate end of all the gratifications of the world is renunciation; this is called *Aparigraha* in Vedic terminology.

But we continue to cling to the smallest things of life as though we could not live without them, as if our very existence were at stake. Even persons holding honorary social offices like those of presidentship and secretaryship try their best to prolong their appointments to them as much as possible, and feel a wrench while making place for the younger generation to step in. We even fail to take our lessons from nature which we see all around us, how the tide rises and falls, how the moon waxes and wanes, and how the night follows day, and day follows night. The man of today has very little time to contemplate on Tennyson's immortal line: 'The old order changeth yielding place to new,' and to be able to grasp the true depth and meaning of his philosophy. If we did would we continue to cling on to our

family, children, and worldly possessions to the utter neglect of the higher values of life till the very flames of death consume us?

The answer to all this is the life of *Aparigraha*, or voluntary dispossession advocated by Vedic culture. *Asteya* (non-stealing) and *Aparigraha* (dispossession) differ from each other. What is the difference? Human nature is an outcome of the interplay of three basic tendencies or instincts which, though mutually related, may operate either jointly or severally in the human mind. Man has wants and he has to find the resources for their satisfaction, this is one of his fundamental instincts. But there is the other instinct of simply accumulating and hoarding things which he does not want, and this is done by fair means or foul. Hence to lay one's hand on each and everything, even if not required and by any means whatsoever, is *Steya* or stealing, but to accumulate only that which is necessary for the upkeep of life is *Asteya* or non-stealing. Besides these the third tendency is that of *Aparigraha. Asteya* or non-stealing may be described as non-possession, *Aparigraha* may be looked upon as dispossession. We should not store up things we do not want and this is non-possession or *Asteya*; but to reduce one's wants and not to depend solely and wholly upon accumulations is dispossession or *Aparigraha.* There comes a time in life when even the things we thought indispensable are of no use whatsoever after having served the purpose they were meant for, and this not clinging to the articles which have outlived their utility is non-possession. But dispossession is that state of mind in which wants are reduced to the minimum and whatever surplus resources remain one tries to dispense with them. Thus it follows that not to store more than required is *Asteya*, but surrendering even what is stored when the time comes is *Aparigraha*. The former is negative, the latter is positive, with respect to the attitude of detachment towards worldly objects.

The materialistic conception believes in *Parigraha* or accumulation. Our covetousness extends to each and everything, so much so, that we deprive others of even the basic minimum and hoard huge stocks of surpluses. Spiritualism lays stress on dispossession. Spiritual life begins with *Asteya* or non-possession and ends in *Aparigraha* or dispossession. Possession, non-possession, dispossession: this is the process of spiritual development and unfoldment. In this perspective we may conclude that not to covet things belonging to others is non-possession or *Asteya*, but to surrender things belonging to oneself is dispossession or *Aparigraha. Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa*

Ashramas of Vedic culture are *Ashramas* of dispossession in which the spirit gets the better of the world of matter by giving and not receiving, by surrendering not hoarding, and by rendering service to mankind instead of being immersed in selfishness. It was the observance of the reluctance of the twentieth century materialistic world to advocate and inculcate these qualities in the individual that prompted Swami Vivekananda to preach: 'If a man throws aside the vanities of the world we hear him called mad, but such men are the salt of the earth. Out of such madness have come the powers that have moved this world of ours, and out of such madness alone will come the powers of the future that are going to move the world.'

Biblical Commandments and the Buddha's Eightfold Path

Centuries have gone by when Patanjali, the founder of *Raja Yoga* school of philosophy, proclaimed to the world these five immaculate spiritual principles which are the foundations of spiritualism. They are called *Yamas* or restraints.[1] Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi initiated their disciples into these very principles. There is a tradition among the Jews that Jehovah, their Lord God, called Moses to Mount Senai and gave him two tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed. Jesus Christ admonished his followers in the Sermon on the Mount not to harm, not to speak untruth, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to hoard. The different religions of the world, however antagonistic, proclaim with one voice the impeccable purity of these principles. Religions apart, even materialism bows its head before these canons and accepts their supremacy. The more they are disclaimed the more they affirm themselves.

Does oil poured on water settle down at the bottom? No, it rises to the surface and spreads in variegated hues. Even so these fundamental spiritual principles though buried under the depths of the darkest deep find their way out to the surface of life and assert themselves as eternal verities. To all intents and purposes violence should dominate over non-violence, untruth over truth, stealing over non-stealing, sensual pleasures over self-control, instinct of possession over non-possession and dispossession. But the history of the world is witness to the stern truth that despite hindrances and obstacles, ultimately it is non-violence that prevails

[1] अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रम्हचर्यापरिग्रहा: यमा: (योगदर्शन, २–३०)

(e) *Bhasrika* means to breathe through each nostril like the bellows of a blacksmith. This cleanses the nasal passage and should be performed after *Neti* or nasal douche or even without it.

(f) *Trataka* means to look at the junction of the eyebrows or at something without a wink till tears roll down. This strengthens the eyes.

Vedic culture gave so much importance to the health of the body because it regarded it as a bow, with the help of which the individual had to shoot his arrow at the target of the spiritual. Hence every effort was made to ensure that the bow was maintained in such a condition that the archer could at any point of time avail himself of it. In this context the Shvetashvatara Upanishad has said: 'The first signs of progress on the path of *Yoga* are health, a sense of physical lightness, clearness of complexion, a beautiful voice, an agreeable odour of the person, and freedom from craving.'[1]

4. Kundalini Awakening or Laya Yoga

The most important of all *Hatha Yoga* practices is the *Kundalini* awakening which is also known as *Laya Yoga*.

Kundalini is considered by *Hatha Yogis* to be a physical power or element situated at the base of the spinal cord which is called *Sushumna* in Sanskrit. This *Kundalini* is as fine as the spider's thread. Some describe it to be a simple power like electricity. It lies in three and a half coils like a sleeping serpent. Dr. T. K. N. Trivikram, who has devoted his life to this science states in *Divine Yoga of the Soul* that this *Sushumna* is not the physical spinal cord. According to him just as the spinal cord is the centre of the nerves in the physical body, *Sushumna* which is situated in the spinal cord is the ethereal cord of the subtle body. As we can reach the subtle body only through the physical body, so also we can concentrate on *Sushumna* solely by engaging all our attention on the different centres in the spinal cord because it is these which constitute a means for concentration on *Sushumna*.

Sushumna has six centres situated in it from the base where the *Kundalini* lies dormant. When the *Kundalini* is awakened it moves upward to these centres. The centres are six in number and are called *Chakras* which means wheels. They are situated in the

[1] लघुत्वमारोग्यमलोलुपत्वं स्वरसौष्ठवं च ।
गन्धः शुभो मूत्रपुरीषमल्पं योगप्रवृत्तिं प्रथमां वदन्ति ।। (श्वेताश्वतर, २–१३)

Sushumna, the approach to which is through concentration on the spinal cord. Hence if we wish to approach the *Sushumna* (subtle body) whilst meditating we should concentrate on the *Chakras* or the centres of *Sushumna* by giving due attention to the corresponding spots in the spinal cord. These centres are as follows:

(a) *Mooladhara Chakra* (pelvic wheel),
(b) *Swadhishthana Chakra* (generative wheel),
(c) *Manipura Chakra* (navel wheel),
(d) *Anahata Chakra* (heart wheel),
(e) *Vishuddhi Chakra* (laryngeal wheel), and
(f) *Ajya Chakra* (frontal wheel).

(a) *Mooladhara Chakra:* It is situated in the *Sushumna* at the base of the spine, or in the coccyx or pelvic region. This is the root where the *Kundalini* as a spiritual force lies dormant or sleeping in three and a half coils. *Sushumna,* as we have said before, is the spinal cord of the subtle body, and all the *Chakras* are in *Sushumna,* the counterpart of which is the spinal cord in the physical body. Meditation, according to *Hatha Yoga*, is always on *Sushumna,* but as this is subtle, in effect, the concentration has to be on the centres of the spinal cord. Meditation on the spinal centres automatically affects the subtler centres of *Sushumna.*

(b) *Swadhishthana Chakra:* It is situated in the neighbourhood of the generative organs in the spinal cord. It lies two inches above the *Mooladhara Chakra.*

(c) *Manipura Chakra:* It is situated at the navel over the solar plexus of the spinal cord. If we were to draw a line from the navel straight towards the spinal cord, the point where it joins the cord is the *Manipura* centre or the navel *Chakra.*

(d) *Anahata Chakra:* It is situated in the spinal centre which meets the point in the middle of the line drawn to join the two nipples of the chest. As this location is of the heart it is called the heart *Chakra.*

(e) *Vishuddhi Chakra:* It is situated in the spinal cord, which is the seat of *Sushumna,* on a level with the throat. This is called the laryngeal *Chakra.*

(f) *Ajya Chakra:* It is situated in the space between the eyebrows. As this *Chakra* is situated in front it is called the frontal *Chakra.*

C. W. Leadbeater writes in his book *The Chakras* concerning the awakening of the *Kundalini* thus:

'The object of the *Yogis* is to arouse the sleeping part of the *Kundalini*, and then cause her to rise gradually up the *Sushumna* canal. Various methods are prescribed for this purpose, including the use of the will, peculiar methods of breathing, *Mantras*, and various postures and movements. The *Shiva Samhita* describes ten *Mudras* which it declares to be the best for the purpose, most of which involve all these efforts at the same time. In writing the effect of one of these methods, Avalon describes the awakening of the inner layers of *Kundalini* as follows: The heat in the body then becomes very powerful, and *Kundalini*, feeling it, awakens from her sleep, just as a serpent struck by a stick hisses and straightens itself up. Then it enters the *Sushumna*.'

This ascent of the *Kundalini* from one centre to another is very gradual. As she enters a centre it becomes illumined, enlivened; and as she leaves each centre in her upward movement these illuminated and enlivened centres become latent for the illumination and enlivenment of the higher centres. The *Kundalini Yoga* is therefore called *Laya Yoga*; *Laya* means latency or disappearance. It disappears in the lower centre to illumine the higher one.

The ultimate object of *Kundalini Yoga* is not merely to awaken the *Kundalini*, but to ensure its ascent to the higher centres. The *Kundalini* in the final stage reaches the topmost location called the *Sahasrara*, that is, the point where the Hindus wear the *Shikha* or the tuft of hair on their heads. At this point there is a union of the *Kundalini* with her lord, *Shakti* with *Shiva* in Puranic terminology, and of the *Atma* with the *Parama Atma* in Vedic terminology. This is the stage of spiritual bliss unalloyed with physical and sensual pleasures. When a *Yogi* reaches this stage he realizes in his very person the individual and separate existence of the soul from the body. In other words, this is the transcendental experience of a *Hath Yogi* through his own method, for the ultimate of all *Yogas* is the knowledge and realization of one's self.

Three Basic Systems of Yoga Evolved for Three Different Types of Men

So far we have dealt with *Hatha Yoga* which concentrates on the body or the physical side of man. Now we shall deal with *Jnyana Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, and *Karma Yoga* which concentrate on the mind or the psychological side of man.

The social fabric is dotted with spots of three different hues,

namely, intelligence, emotion, and action and the Master Painter has supplied the paint of the three *Yogas*, viz., *Jnyan, Bhakti,* and *Karma*, to enliven and bring into due prominence each dot in the fabric. *Jnyan Yoga* is the worship of an impersonal God, *Bhakti Yoga* is the worship of a personal God, and *Karma Yoga* is the worship of the God of action. But it must be remembered that though the spots and paints be of three basic colours, there are innumerable intermingling shades composed by the different permutations and combinations. This is so because very often, shall we say more often than not, mankind fails to attain *Moksha* by treading the path of only one *Yoga*. Hence, though any one *Yoga* may serve as the central pillar for salvation, still history does go a long way to show that man tends to lean on the other *Yogas* also as crutches. Let us take, for example, Christianity whose fundamental tenet is faith, i.e., *Bhakti*. The foundation of the Church is 'faith is greater than works' as stated by Saint Paul, but the walls of the Church do consist of 'deed' bricks as St. Peter says 'faith without works is dead.'

How can we reconcile these two views? The answer is that *Bhakti* is love of God and love can only manifest itself by deeds of kindnesses to your fellow beings who are also God's offsprings. Hence, though all the three *Yogas* we are going to describe are different in nature, they overlap one another in their materialization. Shri Krishna in the Gita says that 'it is only the ignorant who think that the *Yoga* of action is different from the *Yoga* of knowledge. The wise see knowledge and action as one.' He further tells Arjuna that 'a man may take either path but if he follows it faithfully, the end is bound to be the same. The followers of action must meet the seekers after knowledge in equal freedom.'[1] At another place in the Gita, Shri Krishna holds out: 'Whatever path men travel is my path, no matter where they walk it leads to me.'[2]

II. JNYANA YOGA

Jnyana means knowledge. *Jnyana Yoga* is therefore the path that

[1] सांख्ययोगौ पृथग्बालाः प्रवदन्ति न पण्डिताः।
एकमप्यास्थितः सम्यगुभयोर्विन्दते फलम् ।।
यत्सांख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानं तद्योगैरपि गम्यते।
एकं सांख्यं च योगं च यः पश्यति स पश्यति ।। (गीता, ५–४, ५)

[2] ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम्।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ।। (गीता, ४–११)

leads to the knowledge of one's self. 'What am I?' This is the problem that the man of knowledge has to solve.

In order to be able to appreciate the depth of *Jnyana Yoga* one has to be familiar with the significance of the following words: *Avidya, Sadhana Chatushtaya, Maya, Avarana,* and *Vikshepa.* We shall, therefore, now deal with them serially.

1. AVIDYA: Shankaracharya, who was the great exponent of *Jnyana Yoga* or the path of knowledge, postulates that *Avidya* or ignorance is the cause of every pain and misery in life. Ignorance means lack of discrimination between the temporary and the permanent, between the unreal and the real. It is only in ignorance that we regard the temporary as the permanent, the unreal as the real. The temporary is called *Anitya,* the permanent is called *Nitya*; the unreal is known as *Asat,* the real is known as *Sat. Avidya* or ignorance means to regard *Anitya* as *Nitya* and *Asat* as *Sat.* Self-knowledge is the dispelling of this *Avidya.* But how can this be done? For this *Sadhana Chatushtaya* is prescribed.

2. SADHANA CHATUSHTAYA: *Sadhana* means practice or exercise; *Chatushtaya* means four. The following four steps are prescribed for dispelling ignorance: *Viveka, Vairagya, Shat Sampatti* and *Mumukshutva.*

(a) *Viveka: Viveka* is discrimination between the impermanent and the permanent, the unreal and the real, the not-self and the self. It is an exercise in discriminatory thought process beginning with ourselves. We began with the question: 'What am I?' In *Viveka* you begin with the first step: 'Am I the body?' My inner experience convinces me that I am not the body, for besides the body I have an incontrovertible proof that I have also the mind, and thus it is that the body is only a means, an instrument, or a vehicle of the mind. Then comes the second step: 'Am I the mind?' My inner experience again convinces me that I am not the mind, for in dreamless sound sleep when neither the body nor the mind work, I experience a joy of which I have a remembrance when I return from this dreamless sleep. Thus *Viveka* leads me to the third step wherein I realize that I am neither the body nor the mind, but am pure consciousness.

The discriminatory thought process applied to ourselves as described above may also be applied to others, and through *Viveka* we may understand that they also are neither the body nor the mind, but pure consciousness. Hence it is that by *Viveka* or discriminatory thought process one transcends beyond the body as well as the

mind and realizes one's real self. This is the consciousness of disidentifying and disentangling one's self from the physical or mental plane in which one always lives. It is the dawning of this real 'I' or the real self upon the individual that is the achievement of *Viveka* brought about by dispelling *Avidya* or ignorance coupled with the recognition of the permanent and the real transcending the impermanent and the unreal. The practice of such a transcendental meditation through discrimination, through knowledge, through an appreciation of what is and what is not, is *Jnyana Yoga*. This knowledge changes the whole outlook on life and instead of living a life of the flesh, one lives the life of the spirit. As the Shvetashvatara Upanishad says: 'As a soiled piece of metal when it has been cleaned shines brightly, so the dweller in the body when he has realized the truth loses his sorrow and becomes radiant with bliss.'[1]

(b) *Vairagya: Vairagya* is the second step towards the dispelling of *Avidya*. The word *Vairagya* is derived from *Vi* or absence, and *Rag* or passion, and hence *Vairagya* means absence of passion. Lust, greed, anger, attachment, jealousy, are the passions that agitate the mind. *Viveka* or discrimination enables one to view one's self dispassionately as the subject objectifying one's lustful, angry, greedy self, and thereby to dissociate the consciousness from the body and the mind which are affected by these passions. *Vairagya* or dispassionateness is the outcome of *Viveka* or discrimination between the impermanent and the permanent; it is the spirit or the consciousness which is the permanent whereas the body constitutes only the impermanent. The knowledge of the truth that the lustful, the angry, and the greedy 'I' is only an object, and that the dispassionate pure consciousness is the subject, which can view the agitations of the body and the mind as an unaffected witness, is the essence of *Vidya* as opposed to *Avidya*. It is only *Avidya* which confusedly identifies the object with the subject. This is *Vairagya*.

(c) *Shat Sampatti: Shat Sampatti* is the third step toward the realization of self-knowledge. *Shat* means six, *Sampatti* means acquisition. The six spiritual acquisitions or attainments are: *Shama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha, Shraddha*, and *Samadhana*. Let us see what they mean:

[1] यथैव विम्वं मृदयोपलिप्तं तेजोमयं भ्राजते तत्सुधौतम् ।
तद्वदात्मतत्त्वं प्रसमीक्ष्य देही एकः कृतार्थो भवते वीतशोकः ।।
(श्वेताश्वतर, २–१४)

(i) SHAMA means the peaceful mind. The mind generally remains agitated, but after *Viveka* and *Vairagya* these agitations and passions of the mind subside and it finds rest in peace and harmony. It is to this peace and tranquillity of mind that Christ refers when he says: 'Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God,' and 'Peace, my peace, I leave with you.'

(ii) DAMA means control of the body and its needs, heat or cold, pleasure or pain. This also can be achieved by the dis-identification of consciousness from the body or of the spiritual self from the physical entity.

(iii) UPARATI means contentment with one's worldly possessions as well as with the persons one is associated with in life. It is a willing acceptance of the state of men and material one finds oneself in or a sense of detached attachment. *Uparati* is analogous to Chaucer's ideal: 'He that is poor and accepts his poverty unhurt, Is rich though he should lack a shirt. They are truly poor who whine, fret, and covet, Things that others have, and which they cannot hope to get.'

(iv) TITIKSHA means endurance of the hardships of life with a smiling face. *Titiksha* can be compared to the prayer so widely uttered in the Christian world: 'Lord, give me the serenity to accept things I cannot change, courage to change things I can, and wisdom to know them both.'

(v) SHRADDHA is an abiding faith and confidence in the design and working of the grand plan of the universe by the Supreme Power behind the phenomenal world. It is the same as the upholding of the philosophy: 'Thy will be done.'

(vi) SAMADHANA means steadfastness, firmness of purpose, constancy, and resolution. It is a settled condition of the mind.

(d) *Mumukshutva:* It is eagerness for liberation and follows as a result of the above mentioned first three steps. Christ refers to this eagerness for liberation when he promises: 'Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted,' and 'Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall have their fill.'

3. MAYA: It means a wrong conception both about ourselves as well as the real nature of the world. It performs two functions, namely, *Avarana* and *Vikshepa*.

4. AVARANA: *Avarana* means a veil or a cover. The face of the reality both within us and without is hidden behind a veil or a cover; within, the body as well as the mind constitute the veil, and without, the world of matter is the cover. The Isha Upanishad states: 'The

face of reality is hidden behind a golden glamour, lift up the veil, O sustainer of the universe, to enable us to see the reality in its fulness.'[1] The search for truth, subjective and objective, and the removal of the *Avarana*, i.e., the veil or the cover that hides the true nature of the reality is the incessant endeavour of the *Jnyana Yogi.*

5. VIKSHEPA: When the subjective or objective reality is hidden behind the veil, that is, *Avarana* the mind is said to be out of mind or in a state of *Vikshepa.* In Sanskrit *Vikshepa* means madness. It is nothing but madness to treat the veil as the reality. The body is the veil of the inner consciousness, the phenomenal world is the veil of the supreme consciousness, but due to *Avidya* or *Maya* subjectively we treat the body as the reality and objectively we regard the world of matter as the reality. This is called *Vikshepa.*

The word *Vikshepa* has also another meaning, namely, to throw off. The awakened consciousness must no doubt throw off the veil (*Avarana*) that hides the face of the reality, but the question that remains is: how does one throw off the veil or how does one live a life of reality or of pure consciousness?

Our life at present is a life of fusion, of fusion between the body, the mind, and the consciousness which are so much intermixed that one cannot separate the one from the other. The analogy of these three constituents is similar to that of milk and water which when once mixed cannot be separated. *Jnyana Yoga* on the other hand, envisages a coming together of the same constituents of our being like oil and water which though in association are always separable. When the consciousness of dis-identification, in this manner, is saturated in life, the aim and object of *Jnyana Yoga* can be said to have been achieved and the queries as to 'who am I' and 'what am I' are fully answered.

III. BHAKTI YOGA

Bhakti means love and devotion. It is an emotion of the heart. It is a relationship between the lover and the beloved, between the devotee and the object of devotion, and hence obviously between *Atma* and *Parama Atma* or between the soul and a personal God.

[1] हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम्।
तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये।। (ईश, १५)

All the important religions of the world like Hinduism, Mohammedanism, Judaism, and Christianity believe in the existence of a personal God and so are co-travellers on the path of *Bhakti Yoga*. Every *sura* in the Koran begins with 'In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent,' and the theme throughout the Koran is that one should have faith in Allah. For it is Allah who bringeth and quickeneth, it is Allah who rewardeth the good and punisheth the wicked, and it is Allah who raiseth the believers on the judgement day. The Commandment from Mount Sinai reads: 'Thou shall not bow down before any other God, save Me, for know thou this that I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God.' Christ enjoins upon his disciples to observe the greatest commandment of all, namely, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole mind, and thy whole soul and thy neighbour as thyself.' He further states on many an occasion and in various different ways his fundamental precept, namely, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life, whosoever believeth in Me, though he be dead, yet shall he live again, and he who is alive and has faith in Me, to all eternity cannot die.' What else was the Mahayana phase of Buddhism if not a *Bhakti*, a devotion to the Blessed Lord? In Hinduism this worship of a personal God is styled *Saguna* worship or the worship of a God with physical attributes.

It is no doubt true that it is easier to worship a God with physical attributes than one without them, and therefore the worship of a personal God is more prevalent in the world than the worship of an impersonal God. In fact, the meaning of worship in its accepted sense must necessarily be limited to a God with personal attributes because it is only the physical, or the seen, that can excite an emotion of love and devotion. This accounts for temples, churches, etc., being raised and the devotees installing therein idols of the objects of their devotion. It is for this reason that Shri Krishna, in no uncertain terms, tells Arjuna that 'the devotees of the unmanifest have a harder task because the unmanifest is very difficult for embodied souls to realize.'[1]

Nature of a Personal God

The objective as well as personal existence of the object of love

[1] क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम् ।
अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते ।। (गीता, १२–५)

and devotion is essential for any emotional relationship, but where is that personal God whom the devotees might see and worship as an object? The idol installed in the temple, the church, or the mosque is not God as Saint Paul most emphatically states: 'Being therefore the offspring of God, we must not consider His image to be like unto gold or silver, or the engraving of metal or the work of art,' and Mount Sinai decrees that 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.' Thus to equate the idol to the status of a God is regarded as either blasphemy or hypocrisy.

The Bhagawad Gita (XI-15) answers this question by metamorphosing the physical form of the beloved into a universal form or *Vishwa Roopa.* We can visualize God in the form of the sun and the moon, in the form of myriad twinkling stars in the firmament, in the shape of the mighty waves of the ocean, in hills and dales, in the verdure of impenetrable forests, in the ripples of the roaring rivers, when we see God in the appearance of the teeming millions of men, women, and children that inhabit the globe. Thus God in His infinite glory becomes physically visible and manifests Himself to His devotee because these glorious manifestations or *Vibhutees* as they are called in the Gita are His physical forms. It is in this manner that the devotee not only sees but also feels the vibrating presence of universal consciousness even in the smallest of the small. Did not Martin Luther say: 'Our Lord wrote the promise of the resurrection not in books alone but in every flower that blooms during the springtime'?

The concept of *Vishwa Roopa* delineated in the Gita is as Vedic as the concept of *Nishkama Karma* explained in a previous chapter. Both these concepts had their origin in the ancient Vedic literature. Regarding *Nishkama Karma* Shri Krishna himself stated that he was divulging it as an old secret. The same holds good with regard to the concept of *Vishwa Roopa.* God in His essential nature is invisible but He manifests Himself through the magnificence and munificence of the universe. The vast expanse of the earth, the unfathomable depths of the water, the unscaled heights of the mountains, the starry heavens with innumerable suns and moons: all are physical manifestations of the Supreme Divine Power that keeps them animated. The Gita has enunciated them as *Vibhutees* or manifestations of the Divine; the Upanishads without using the word *Vibhutees* have recounted them one by one as the physical manifestations of God. The Shvetashvatara Upanishad says:

'Having His face in all directions, in the form of physical manifestations of His creation, He stands face to face with all sentient creatures.'[1]

Shri Krishna gave a vision of personified super-consciousness to Arjuna who saw the glory of God reflected in all that lived and moved as well as all that did not move upon the earth. Such a vision, of course, could not be a common experience, and so Shri Krishna with his *Yogic* power is said to have given him the super-conscious sight or *Divya Chakshu* which enabled him to see God everywhere and in everything that met his mortal eye. God can only become a personal God when viewed through such an eye, and His devotee sees Him, talks to Him, and gets a response from Him. It is a misconception to regard the path of *Bhakti* or devotion as the easiest path for salvation because a devotee is not one who merely claims to love God, but one who has this super-conscious sight or *Divya Chakshu.* This enables him to see God everywhere hidden behind the veil of the phenomenal world.

The Gita says that God manifests Himself physically through His *Vibhutees* or glorious manifestations, such as the earth, the water, the fire, the air, the sky, and the thunder. These are, as it were, His physical, embodied, external, and personified manifestations. Is it not irony that instead of seeing and worshipping God in these glorious manifestations of the Most High which are present here before our eyes, we prefer to see and worship God in the persons born thousands of years ago and about whom we have no true appreciation? Well did Keats say: ' "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," —that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Nature of Bhakti or Devotion

Shri Krishna has propounded three essentials for a devotee who is eager to worship God through the path of *Bhakti.* They are: concentration on the object of devotion, constancy, and faith. Let us now deal with each of these separately.

1. CONCENTRATION: Concentration means that the devotee, instead of hovering round the object of love and devotion, should enter into the core of the object of love and devotion and feel as if he were one with it. He should lose his sense of individuality and merge himself completely into the object of his love and devo-

[1] प्रत्यङ् जनास्तिष्ठति सर्वतोमुखः। (श्वेताश्वतर, २–१६ ; ३–२)

tion. This approach has been described in the Gita as *Mayi Manah Aveshya* (XII-2) or 'penetrating into Me, be absorbed in Me. Lodge your mind in Me, make Me your dearest delight with devotion undaunted.'[1] The devotee does not stand aloof from the object of his *Bhakti,* he simply penetrates into it. He is so much engrossed with and into the object of his love and devotion that he forgets his separate entity.

2. CONSTANCY: The second essential on the path of devotion is constancy. This has been described in the Gita as *Nitya Yuktah* or always, day and night, abiding in the beloved. Devotion is not a feeling to be cultivated, it is a part and parcel of the very being of the devotee. The immortal words of Krishna are: 'Even if the vilest sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be considered a saint; for he has rightly resolved,'[2] and 'Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Know it for certain, O son of Kunti, My devotee never fails.'[3] It does not mean that a sinner continuing to commit sins is absolved of sins by devotion. A devotee who loses his consciousness in the Lord cannot think of committing sins, and one who continues a sinful life whilst calling himself a devotee is nothing but a hypocrite.

3. FAITH: The third essential of devotion is faith which has been described in the Gita as *Shraddhaya Upetah* or having come unto Me with faith. The word *Shraddha* does not mean blind faith. It is derived from two components: *Shrat* meaning truth, and *dhu* meaning to imbibe. When the feeling of devotion rests on a factual and truthful experience, then only is *Shraddha* possible in terms of the Vedic conception.

It is only with these three essentials engrained in one's personality that one can travel along the path of *Bhakti Yoga* to reach the cherished goal of self-knowledge and self-realization.

The Essence of Bhakti Yoga

The essence of *Jnyana Yoga* is knowledge; and similar to the psy-

[1] मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।
श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मता: ।। (गीता, १२–२)

[2] अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्य: सम्यक् व्यवसितो हि स: ।। (गीता, ९–३०)

[3] क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्ति निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्त: प्रणश्यति ।। (गीता, ९–३१)

cho-analyst who believes that the abnormality disappears when the cause of tension and neurosis is brought to the conscious self, the theme of *Jnyana Yoga* is that we suffer due to ignorance. Knowledge is a fire that consumes and reduces to ashes all the abnormalities of the subconscious. The Gita says: 'He whose undertakings are all free from desire and thoughts of the world, and whose actions are burnt up by the fire of knowledge, him even the wise call a sage.'[1]

Repeating the same idea the Gita has stressed once again: 'As the blazing fire reduces the fuel to ashes, Arjuna, even so the fire of knowledge reduces all actions to ashes.'[2] Even Maharshi Vyas developing the same thesis in *Yoga Darshana* has stated: 'With the fire of knowledge the afflictions are reduced to attenuation like the scorched seeds that lose the power of germination.'[3] All this may sound strange in this age of psycho-analysis when it is universally recognised that the knowledge of the origin of one's neurotic behaviour makes one's mind normal. But the fact is that this has been the very theory propounded by Shankaracharya and other savants of Vedic culture since the formulation of *Jnyana Yoga*.

The essence of *Bhakti Yoga,* as against *Jnyana Yoga* is that it is not knowledge, but sacrifice-cum-self-surrender which is the path to spiritual progress. The devotee so much surrenders his consciousness to the super-conscious, his thoughts, feelings, and actions to the God he worships, that he actually feels that all his responsibility is taken over by the Supreme. How frail is man and how stupid of him to think that he is the sole arbiter of his destiny. It is the Power beyond us that presides over the sprouting of a sapling, the chirping of a bird, and the throbbing of the human heart. To surrender unto that Will is the only consolation of man and unto that Will have surrendered themselves the saints and sages of the world like Socrates, Christ, Bruno, Dayanand, and Gandhi in the last excruciating moments of their lives.

[1] यस्य सर्वे समारम्भाः कामसंकल्पवर्जिताः ।
ज्ञानाग्निदग्धकर्माणं तमाहुः पण्डितं बुधाः ।। (गीता, ४–१८)

[2] यथैधांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात् कुरुतेऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात् कुरुते तथा ।। (गीता, ४–३७)

[3] प्रतनुकृतान् क्लेशान् प्रसांख्यानाग्निना (ज्ञानेन) दग्धबीजकल्पान् अप्रसवधर्मिणः करिष्यति । (योगदर्शन, द्वितीय पाद–साधनपाद)

The Difference between Jnyana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga

Jnyana Yoga is known as *Nirguna Upasana* or worship of an impersonal God, *Bhakti Yoga* is known as *Saguna Upasana* or worship of a personal God. The difference between the worship of a personal God (*Saguna Upasana*) and an impersonal God (*Nirguna Upasana*) may be illustrated by the following example: suppose your mother is lying on her death-bed and to reach the place you have to cross a thorny, winding, mountainous path of several miles situated in a thick forest. You can pass through the thorns and thistles cursing every obstacle that blocks your way at each step. Or you can thank your stars that even in such a forest there exists at least this narrow and thorny path that will enable you to reach the bedside of your dying mother. You can reach the same destination with both these states of mind, but look at the difference in the two attitudes. The one who treads the path whilst cursing it for its thorns and thistles is the *Jnyana Yogi* for even though intent on achieving selfhood he is at every moment conscious of the pain involved in it. But the one who thanks his stars or is grateful for the path being there despite all its obstacles is the *Bhakti Yogi* for his heart is set on the ultimate achievement and is not perturbed by the pain involved. Thus it is that though the object is the same, it is the attitude that makes the difference. Besides, in *Jnyana Yoga* one relies upon one's own self, in *Bhakti Yoga* one relies upon one greater than one's self. It is obvious that one would think of relying only upon one's self when one has no faith in a greater or a higher power. *Bhakti,* therefore, is possible only when one has an implicit faith in the Supreme, a faith not founded on intellectual appreciation but on emotional compelling experience as Saint Paul says: 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.'

IV. KARMA YOGA

There is a third category of men who are neither intellectually nor emotionally constituted, but are rather men of action. They do not believe in any creed or philosophy, nor do they pray to a personal God. Action is their creed, action their philosophy, action their prayer and worship, action their God. What, therefore, is the path open to them for self-realization?

There is also another problem which confronts these men of action. Man is subject to the law of *Karma*. The law of *Karma*

is a spiritual counterpart of the physical law of cause and effect. Man is inextricably bound up in this cyclic wheel of cause and effect. In bondage there is no freedom and without freedom life is not worth living. If, therefore, a man follows the path of action or *Karma* because he is neither intellectual nor emotional by nature, he is faced with the problem of freeing himself from the bondages of *Karma*. Moreover, *Karma* may have good, bad, or indifferent results. One is not so much concerned with the good or the indifferent results, because the good will only bring pleasure and the indifferent will create no problem. But it is the bad results which bring sorrow and suffering. The main problem for a man of action is how to get rid of the evil consequences of *Karma* as well as the disappointment in certain other results which though ardently wished for do not turn out to be so.

The Solution of the Problem

There is no escape from the bad results of evil *Karmas*. This is in tune with the law and the only way to escape the impact of the evil consequences is to avoid the undesirable acts. Thus the problem narrows itself down to the good intentioned *Karmas* bearing evil results, and others assiduously performed with the object of favourable results bringing nothing in their wake. The answer of *Karma Yoga* to both these problems is *Nishkama Karma* or disinterested action.

Nishkama Karma or Disinterested Action

The secret of *Karma* according to *Karma Yoga* is to work for the sake of work, as well as the fact that it is a good, honest, and desirable task, and then to leave the fruits thereof to the governance of the universal laws that rule the world. It is only the expectation of a wished for result that brings sorrow and suffering. The result of a *Karma* is conditioned not with our personal desire, but in the context of a universal scheme of which our desire is but a part. Is it not probable that in the sum total, with all the pluses and minuses aggregated as well as adjusted against each other, ultimately our *Karmas* may be on the minus side compared to the *Karmas* of others who dominate the scene resulting in the nullification of our desires? Bernard Shaw very aptly in *Saint Joan* voices out that God has to be fair to the enemy also. If this be the case, why should we indulge in sorrow and suffering? Why should we not perform our

duty and leave the rest to the dispensation of the Power that regulates the scheme of things?

This, of course, is only an ideal, and hence the question that arises is: how does one perform disinterested action? According to Vedic culture the *Atma* in its essential nature is distinct from the body and the mind. It is the mind and the body that perform the interested action and *Atma*, even though distinct from them, identifies itself with the body and the mind. It is this identification which is the cause for the *Atma* to expect a favourable result, whereas in reality, the *Atma* is neither the doer nor the performer of the act, it is only a witness in the drama and not the actor in it. It is only with the dawning of the realization of one's nature or the nature of *Atma* as being only an observer, or a witness, that disinterestedness automatically ensues.

Disinterested Action is Not Renunciation of Interest

It is generally believed that disinterested action is the renunciation of interest in the result ensuing from the act, or that we should perform the deed but cease to be interested in its good, bad, or indifferent result. This appears, on the face of things, to be advising the impossible. How is it possible that we may perform an action and yet not be interested in its result? *Karma Yoga* contends that the problem is not that of not expecting a result because the result must necessarily follow according to the law of causation. But the issue is that of neither expecting a favourable result nor of grieving if the consequence is not agreeable. Basically, it is attachment (*Asakti*) according to the *Karma Yogi* which causes all sorrow and suffering. We are so much attached to the things of the world that when we are dispossessed of them or deprived of them, either by way of an unfavourable result or in not obtaining a wished for result, our suffering knows no bounds. Since it is this attachment (*Asakti*) which is the cause of every suffering, the only way to get rid of all sorrow is through non-attachment (*Anasakti*).

But non-attachment, renunciation, or *Anasakti* is not a negative attitude of the mind. The mind cannot renounce a thing until and unless it is given a positive substitute. But work and action according to the *Karma Yogi* are by themselves a positive substitute, external as well as internal. Externally, work in the form of selfless service to humanity, and internally, the withdrawal into one's consciousness only to come into active contact with the fountain

of all life can be the source of much perennial and positive pleasure. Thus the apple of attachment to the objects of the world automatically drops from the tree of the self, and one begins to wend one's way through the garden of paradise. It is in this sense that non-attachment and disinterestedness merely mean the attachment to and interestedness in the higher values of life. This is the true interpretation of *Anasakti Yoga* or *Yoga* of non-attachment or disinterestedness. The idea is not of renunciation which is negative, but of attainment which is positive. Renunciation is the logical consequence of attainment. When you attain the higher values of life, the lower ones automatically loosen their hold. Whilst climbing a ladder the moment you set foot on the higher steps do not the lower ones yield way without any effort?

Disinterested Action is Unselfish Action

The matter of *Karmas* may be considered from another angle. When I perform a *Karma* with a motive to benefit only myself, I dissociate myself from others and thus imprison myself in my narrow cell. In this sense we can all be compared to oysters, each closeted within its own shell. But a life of the spirit is in expansion, not in contraction. It is the ego in me that keeps me confined to my narrow self, but can the world move even one inch forward if everyone thought only in terms of himself? It is only by forgetting one's self, one's personal and selfish interests, and by thinking in terms of universalism that humanity as a whole can move towards progress. Let us take our lesson once again from the oyster. Does the oyster even though confined to its shell form the pearl for itself? No, it works so that man may enjoy the fruits of its labour. The same is the case with the bee and its honey. All around, even in blind nature we see this universal truth manifesting itself, namely, that one does not work for one's self alone, but has to work for others, and that it is only thus that one can also ensure one's own progress. Is it not a fact that our individual progress depends also upon the progress of the community as a whole? If this be so, it is only unselfish action in which the ego has been eliminated that can lead to the onward march of humanity. This unselfish action is possible only when the action is disinterested.

Interested Action is Selfish Action

Karma is the spiritual counterpart of the physical law of causa-

tion. Every action must have a corresponding reaction. If our action is selfish it must generate vibrations of selfish reaction in others. The result is that the accumulated *Karma* of humanity as a whole will be a fund of stark and naked selfishness. The philosophy of each one for himself and God for all gives rise to individualism, groupism, casteism, and regionalism and makes men fight against men, groups against groups, castes against castes, and regions against regions. Selfish action thus leads to disintegration. *Karma Yoga,* therefore, lays stress on selfless or disinterested action which invokes similar response in others. When every one is imbued with the spirit of disinterested, unselfish action, then the accumulated response of disinterestedness and unselfishness brings man nearer to man. Thus the narrow concepts which divide man from man, community from community, nation from nation will disappear. *Nishkama Karma* in this sense on the individual and the social plane is the panacea of all the ills that humanity is suffering from today. Everyone for others and none for himself is the quintessence of *Nishkama Karma.*

Karma, Vikarma, and Akarma

Besides *Nishkama Karma,* there is another aspect of *Karma Yoga* which has to be kept in mind. *Karma* has been divided into three categories: *Karma, Vikarma,* and *Akarma* (Gita, 4, 17-18). *Karma* means action, *Vikarma* refers to the life or zest in action, *Akarma* means no action. Every action must have life, enthusiasm, zest, emotional selflessness in it, otherwise the act becomes meaningless. This idea is conveyed by the word *Vikarma.* In Sanskrit *Vi* means with a particular emphasis, *Karma* means action. Every action which is a selflessly emphatic emotional action may be called a *Vikarma.* When a selfless action is performed with all the zest and enthusiasm rightly channelled, it is called a *Vikarma.* But as soon as *Karma* becomes *Vikarma* it automatically converts itself into an *Akarma* or no action and it ceases to have the effect of a *Karma* which binds. As the Gita says: 'He who sees the inaction that is in action and the action that is in inaction is wise indeed.'[1]

The above statement can best be illustrated by means of the following example: the mother slaps the child for his misbehaviour

[1] कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्म यः।
स वुद्धिमान् मनुष्येपु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत्॥ (गीता, ४–१९)

but the child holds on to the mother all the more tightly, whereas if a third person were to chide him for the same misbehaviour the child would become furious. Why are there two dissimilar responses to the same act? This is so because when the mother slaps the child, she does the *Karma* with a depth of feeling which is absent in the case of the third person. This feeling of the mother is *Vikarma.* The result of this *Vikarma* is *Akarma*, that is, it amounts to the fact as if the mother had performed no action at all, for despite the slap the child holds on all the tighter to the mother and the mother also does not repel the child. It is this feeling in the action, or the *Vikarma* element in *Karma*, that makes the *Karma* or action infructuous or, shall we say, converts it into an *Akarma* or no action. This, says the Gita, is the way to get rid of the entanglements of *Karma,* in the absence of which all *Karmas* must end in bondage.

Karma Yoga and Fatalism

It is generally believed that the philosophy of *Karma* is an outcome of fatalism or that it leads to fatalism. 'We are what we are due to our *Karmas* of the past,' is said to be the philosophy of *Karma. Karma Yoga* accepts this proposition but expands the hypothesis by adding: whatever we have sown in the past must bear fruit, but we are free to sow what we choose in the present and reap as we will. We bring our destiny with us but we can negate the past and create a new destiny for ourselves by our *Karmas* just as in the past we created our destiny by our *Karmas.* Thus the philosophical lantern to be kept burning in front of us should be lighted with the fuel of Shakespeare's words: 'So every bondman in his own hand bears The power to cancel his capacity.' In this context the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad states in no uncertain terms that it is desires-cum-deeds that are destiny.[1]

V. RAJA YOGA

In the course of this chapter we dealt firstly with the *Yoga* of the body called *Hatha Yoga*; secondly, we peered into the three *Yogas* of the mind with its three aspects of knowing, feeling, and willing in the form of *Jnyana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga,* and *Karma Yoga.*

[1] काममय एवायं पु[illegible] स यथाकामो भवति तत्क्रतुर्भवति यत्क्रतुर्भवति तत्कर्म कुरुते यत्कर्म कु[illegible]द्यते। (वृहदारण्यक, ४–३–५)

Now we shall deal with a particular system of *Yoga* in which all these and others are integrated and for which reason it is styled *Raja Yoga* or king of all the *Yogas*. The exponent of this *Yoga* was Patanjali who embodied his teachings in aphorisms known as *Yoga Darshana*.

1. Five Afflictions

Raja Yoga says that man is subject to five afflictions which it calls *Pancha Kleshas*. These afflictions are: *Avidya, Asmita, Raga, Dvesha*, and *Abhinivesha* which when translated into English mean: ignorance, I-am-ness, desire, aversion, and the will to live. These five afflictions can be said to be the legs on which crawl the cancerous insects of suffering, destruction, and dissolution. It is these insects which creepingly approach and eat into the individual's peace and mental calm as well as attack and destroy the very roots of the social tree. We shall now deal with each of these separately.

(a) *Ignorance:* Ignorance has been defined as a mental state in which the illusory is mistaken for the true, that which is apparent for the real, and the impermanent for the permanent. The cause of every affliction is to regard the body as being real and permanent.

(b) *I-Am-Ness:* In Sanskrit *Asmi* means I am and so we have translated *Asmita* as I-am-ness. I-am-ness is defined as the identification of the seer with the instruments of knowledge. When I say 'I am tired' it is the body that is tired and not the spirit; when I say 'I am angry' it is the mind that is in anger, not the spirit. It is the identification of the body and the mind with the spirit which makes me think that the spirit is tired or angry. I am neither the body nor the mind, but when I forget this fact, I am afflicted with I-am-ness or *Asmita* which has to be fought against.

(c) *Desire or Liking:* This is defined as the dwelling on pleasurable sensations. It is the pursuit for pleasure which when thwarted brings pain, and it is only the unfulfilled desire that causes affliction. The Gita says: 'He alone knows peace who has forgotten desire.'[1]

(d) *Aversion or Disliking:* This is defined as dwelling on the painful aspect of a thing. The more one dwells on things that one dislikes the greater becomes the pain. This is the fourth cause of affliction.

[1] विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्पुमांश्चरति निस्पृहः।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥ (गीता, २–७१)

It was essentially to enable the individual to divert his attention from the painful aspects of life, and to free the mind from its passions and its spites that the Sermon on the Mount pronounces: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.'

(e) *Will To Live:* This is the fifth affliction that brings us misery. We cling to the bodily comforts and regard the body as the ultimate reality instead of treating it merely as an instrument at the disposal of or for the use of the soul. This does not mean in the least that the body is to be neglected. No owner of an instrument can avail himself fully of it until and unless it is in perfect order, but the point to be borne in mind is that an instrument is after all only an instrument. We tend to be grossly affected if anything goes wrong with this instrument, that is, when we are ill or grow old and are liable to be snatched away by the falcon of death. This will to live eternally in the physical tenement is common from the lowest worm to the highest sage and is the fifth cause of affliction. It was the observance of this will to live which brings in its wake a fear of death that prompted Shakespeare to pen: 'Cowards die many times before their deaths; The valiant never taste of death but once.' Christ also decrees: 'For whosoever will save his life shall loose it,' and further continues: 'but he who lays down his life for My sake will save it.' The will to live is equivalent to this will to save one's life.

2. The Eightfold Path

Patanjali has laid down a regular course to fight against these five afflictions which is known as *Raja Yoga*. It is sometimes called *Ashtanga Yoga* or *Ashtanga Marga* or the eightfold spiritual path. The eight constituents of *Raja Yoga* are:

(a) *Yama* (five abstentions),
(b) *Niyama* (five observances),
(c) *Asanas* (eighty-four balanced postures),
(d) *Pranayama* (regulation of breath or the life force),
(e) *Pratyahara* (withdrawal of senses),
(f) *Dharana* (concentration),
(g) *Dhyana* (deliberation or meditation), and
(h) *Samadhi* (contemplation).

(a) YAMA: FIVE ABSTENTIONS

The five abstentions and the five observations coupled together may be considered to be the Ten Commandments of *Yoga*. They

are akin to the Biblical Ten Commandments. The five abstentions proclaim a moral law for universal application. These five abstentions are: *Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya,* and *Aparigraha* which may be translated into English as: abstention from violence, lying, stealing, sensuality, and greed. The interpretation of these moral laws is similar to meanings attached to the different truths proclaimed from the Sermon on the Mount. Abstention from violence does not merely mean non-killing, it is equivalent to universal brotherhood; non-lying should be treated as honesty and truthfulness in everyday behaviour; non-stealing upholds the right of others; non-sensuality is interpreted as a life of simplicity; and absence of greed includes charitableness to all in word and deed as Mohammed has rightly said: 'Every smile is charity.' We have already dealt with each of these in detail in Chapter XII.

(b) NIYAMA: FIVE OBSERVANCES

The five observances are: *Shaucha, Santosha, Tapa, Svadhyaya, Ishvara Pranidhana* which when translated into English mean purification, contentment, self-discipline, studiousness, and resignation to God.

(i) *Purification:* Purification means purity of the body and the mind. Purity and cleanliness of the body and environment in which one lives is helpful in maintaining the health of the mind. Is it not said that cleanliness is next to godliness? As far as the purity of mind is concerned does not Christ say: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'?

(ii) *Contentment:* Contentment is the willing acceptance of things as they are with regard to oneself and others. It does not imply lack of ambition. One should do one's utmost to achieve what one wants but should remain contented with what is obtained through one's pursuits. The habit of finding fault and grumbling should be totally given up.

(iii) *Self-Discipline:* Self-discipline is the control of bodily indulgences. The Sanskrit word for it is *Tapas.* Some commentators have translated *Tapas* as self-mortification. Self-mortification has been very common and very widely advocated amongst the different religions of the world: some upholding the infliction of lashes on the body, others ordering one of the hands to be held out till it withers, and still others prescribing various other scourges. But *Tapas* should not be construed to include all these tortures.

The Gita classifies *Tapas* to be of three types, i.e., of the body, of the speech, and of the mind. *Tapas* of the body is purity, continence, discipline; *Tapas* of speech means truthfulness, kindness, affection; *Tapas* of the mind includes clarity of thought, coolness, quietude.

(iv) *Studiousness:* Studiousness is the study of one's self. The Sanskrit word for it is *Svadhyaya. Sva* means self, *Adhyayana* means study. This study of self, generally conveyed by the aphorism 'Know Thyself' is the fourth of the five observances enjoined upon a *Raja Yogi. Svadhyaya* also embraces a study from books.

(v) *Resignation to God:* This is the fifth observance prescribed for a *Raja Yogi.* Man may embark upon innumerable plans but the grand plan of the universe is not of his making. Each of us is an infinitesimally tiny speck in the plan of the Maker who designed this glorious world. We have a place in the scheme as every brick has a place in a mansion, but the part has to fit into the whole and not the whole into the part. This attitude is one of resignation and surrender unto Him who is the presiding deity over the destiny of the whole of creation. It is this which is not generally acceptable to man that has very aptly been described by Chaucer as: 'It is the folly of a rebel soul To murmur against Him who guides the whole.'

(c) Asanas: Balanced Postures

Whilst dealing with *Hatha Yoga* earlier in this chapter, we have described some *Asanas* which are conducive to health. Patanjali recommends that any posture which is not fatiguing is the best for spiritual exercise.

(d) Pranayama: Regulation of Breath

We have already said sufficient on this topic of *Pranayama* whilst discussing *Hatha Yoga* in the earlier part of this chapter. *Prana* is usually regarded as the breath, but it is actually far more than the breath; *Prana* is the life force, breath is only its physical manifestation. The regulation of and concentration on it enables one to reach the innermost consciousness and thus ultimately leads to *Samadhi* or the state of super-consciousness.

(e) Pratyahara: Withdrawal of Senses

The fifth step in *Raja Yoga* is the withdrawal of senses from the

external objects. If we are attending a lecture and a car passes by, blowing its horn, do not we at once turn our attention towards it? It is this which is not *Pratyahara.* One should try to practise not to be disturbed by noise or any other distraction. One cannot concentrate on the self unless one is trained or drilled into the process of withdrawing the senses from the sense-objects. Concentration implies withdrawal because without withdrawing the senses from one object you cannot concentrate on another. The Gita says: 'Patiently and gradually, a man must set himself at rest from all mental distractions with the aid of a determined and intelligent will. His mind should not think of anything else but the soul.'[1]

(f) DHARANA: CONCENTRATION

Concentration is defined as holding the attention fixed upon an object. Despite an effort on our part to fix our attention upon a specific object, it (attention or the mind) tends to wander hither and thither. But if we keep fixedly to the object alone and cast aside the intruding thoughts, the attention must get focussed. Every time that an intrusion takes place let us remind ourselves that it is an intrusion and the very awareness of it will cause the intrusion automatically to disappear. The intruder can take the field only when we forget that he is an intruder. Depicting the state of *Dharana* the Gita states: 'Just as the light of a lamp does not flicker in a windless place, similarly a *Yogi* has his mind fixed upon the *Atma* and it never wavers.'[2]

(g) DHYANA: MEDITATION

Concentration prepares the way for meditation. Concentration is the result of the withdrawal of the mind from the sense-objects and its fixation on a particular point or object. After coming to or arriving at a specific point, one starts revolving or weighing in the mind all the variegated aspects of this point or phenomena. This is meditation. Concentration brings you *to* a point and meditation takes you *into* the point.

[1] शनैः शनैरुपरमेद्बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया ।
आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥ (गीता, ६–२५)

[2] यथा दीपो निवातस्थो नेङ्गते सोपमा स्मृता ।
योगिनो यतचित्तस्य युञ्जतो योगमात्मनः ॥ (गीता, ६–१९)

(h) SAMADHI: CONTEMPLATION

After entering into the point, one becomes so much submerged into it that even though conscious, one must lose one's individual consciousness. One who attains this state of existence enters into the super-conscious. This state of awakened sleep is known as *Samadhi*. In this state of consciousness one is unconscious of the body, but is conscious of or is alert to the divine presence in his inner being. Describing the state of *Samadhi* the Gita says: 'The *Yogi* released from the sins and evils of the world, with his mind resting in contemplation enjoys with ease the bliss eternal springing out of his contact with *Brahma*.'[1]

Withdrawal, concentration, meditation, and contemplation are linked with one another, each step leading to the other in a graduated process. It is thus that when the senses withdraw themselves from the outside world concentration follows; when we concentrate upon an object or a thought we enter into it and meditate; when we enter into an object or thought in this way we become engrossed with and lost into it, unconscious of our existence. This is our daily analytical psychological experience. This state of awakened consciousness which is attained by entering into the super-conscious is called *Samadhi*, and it is essentially for the attainment of this state that all the systems of *Yoga* have been evolved. This forgetfulness of the body is not an uncommon phenomenon for do we not all lose our bodily consciousness when we are absorbed in the world of the senses? This common experience directed to the higher realities of life leads to the spiritual state of *Samadhi*.

Finally, two facts may well be highlighted by way of conclusion. Firstly, the basis of every *Yoga* system is renunciation or non-attachment. The *Karma Yogi* renounces the fruits of his actions. The *Bhakti Yogi* sacrifices every individual love and emotion at the altar of his supreme love. The *Jnyana Yogi* must surrender his individuality and merge himself with the corporate being of mankind. Secondly, the ultimate aim and utility of every system of *Yoga*, in the words of Swami Vivekananda is: 'to bring out the perfect man, and not let him wait and wait for ages, just a plaything in the hands of the physical world, like a log of drift-wood carried from wave to wave, and tossing about in the ocean.'

[1] युञ्जन्नेवं सदात्मानं योगी विगतकल्मषः ।
सुखेन ब्रह्मसंस्पर्शमत्यन्तं सुखमश्नुते ।। (गीता, ६–२८)

EPILOGUE

THE theme of this book has been an exploration, a treasure hunt, into the realms of the spirit as fathomed out by Vedic culture. The hounds of this culture pursue the stags of both the reality as well the unreality. The world is said to be real because we can see it, touch it, and smell it; it is unreal because of its fleeting and impermanent nature. Truth lies in a synthesis between the real and the unreal, and it is precisely this that was the ideal visualised by the Vedic masters as has been clearly revealed to us in the course of our hunt. True religion and true philosophy lie in an all-embracing, *all-inclusive approach that must take into account every aspect* of reality which though seemingly multi-faced and contradictory is basically one and undivided. The Rig Veda declares: 'Truth is one but the sages call it differently.'[1] Vedic culture by accepting every aspect of reality, the material and the non-material, presents a rare combination of religion and philosophy with science.

But whither is the world moving? The man of today is very much the creature of science which dominates his intellect, his aspirations, his visions. His life is nothing but a desperate plunge into the hitherto unexplored regions of the physical world. The glories of science have so much dazzled and overpowered him that he has completely lost sight of the other important aspect of his nature. Is not his vision dimmed with regard to his inner self? He has acquired knowledge of various physical sciences dealing with animal, plant, and insect life, but has no knowledge of his own inner potential self. He is soaring to heights undreamt of in the outer space, but is unaware of the spiritual heights which his own soul could scale. He is enamoured of the glories and boons science has bestowed upon him, but has yet to learn the lesson of delving deep into the potential of peace, bliss, and harmony that lies within. He knows not that the unity, oneness, and homogeneity which he is at pains to discover in the world outside emanates only from the unity and oneness of consciousness called *Brahma* by the Upanishadic Rishis. Did not the Upanishad declare: 'Everything comes

[1] एकं सत् विप्रा वहुधा वदन्ति। (ऋक्, १–१६४–४६ तथा अथर्व, ९–१०–२८)

from *Brahma*, everything lives in *Brahma* and everything returns to *Brahma*'? Even in the Bible, we come across a similar train of thought when Saint Paul says: 'For in Him we live, and we move, and we are, and have our being.' But what is the significance of these thoughts to the modern man who is swept off by the stream of science and the oceanic waves of pleasures?

It is the ignorance of this fact of spiritual consciousness, lying at the base of the structure of the universe, which is responsible for the creation of the imbalance in the modern man's personality. It is on account of this that a man of this age knows no peace. He is constantly at war with himself within and with the world without. He is full of distrust, suspicion, envy, hatred, and fear. His heart is empty and his inner world and mind are blank. He harbours no love and has no sensitivity for humanity at large. He is confined to the cocoon of his own egoistic creation. The unlimited power that science has released is used by man only for the ignoble purposes of aggression, exploitation, and distraction through the manufacture of bombs, rockets, and other means of devastation.

The tragedy of the modern man is that despite his having so much power at his command, he is nevertheless full of unrest, frustration, despair, agony, and fear. All this is due to his total negligence of the spirit that lurks within. Man is not the body alone, he is all inclusive, i.e., the body, the mind, and the soul. It is all these three together that constitute the man. The knowledge of the inner self is as essential for the fuller development of man as is the knowledge of the world outside. Vedic culture went a step further and declared that the body and the mind are only the instruments or vehicles of the soul, and it is the outer which must be subservient to the inner. It is the neglect of the inner which is the cause of every ill and agony of our modern age. Humanity, it is truly said, is suffering from the crisis of the soul. And it is only by a rediscovery and recapture of the spirit that any substantial, lasting, or permanent solution of our present day problems will be arrived at.

Herein lies the true significance of every system of *Yoga* propounded by Vedic culture. What is *Yoga*? It is not a running away from the world. How can one ignore the world when our lot is so irrevocably cast into it? Any religion and philosophy that shuts its eyes to the realities of the solid world of matter and sense-objects cannot be considered to be true religion and true philosophy. Is it not said that truth is greater than religion? And what is the world of matter

if not a truth? *Yoga* is but a sojourn into the inner consciousness for the experience and enjoyment of the fuller reality after having accepted and enjoyed the world of matter with the fullness of its limitations. The outer without the inner and the inner without the outer are only half the reality. Life is fuller and richer when consciousness ceases to meander on its outer fringe and retreating within is enthroned on its seat of majesty and power to command from there the life within and the flow without.

Our mastery over forces of nature has given us power to dominate, power to exploit, and power to destroy which leads to injustice, hatred, oppression, and unrest. If this blind nature coupled with the mechanical world outside alone were the ultimate reality, whatever is happening today must of a necessity be the consequence. But can it be said that justice, equality, love, co-operation, peace, are the outcome of this blind mechanical force? And do not we, one and all, pine for them, yearn for them, and at times even cry for them? Wherefrom, then, emanates the unending call for these non-material values if not from the spirit? These can only be the compulsions of consciousness and not of matter. It is knowledge of the self and self alone that gives us the power to love, the power to understand, the power to sacrifice and to tolerate. It thus enables us to create an atmosphere of peace, equality, justice, goodwill, co-operation, and benevolence all around.

Humanity today needs for its survival a new outlook, a new vision, and a world of new estimates based on the values dictated by the spirit. The knowledge of the self wedded to science and technology is the only hope for the salvation of mankind.

But who will bring home to the world the imperative need of these new values of life? The Gita says: 'In every age when evil increases and goodness decreases, darkness prevails and light is overshadowed, the Super-conscious manifests His power through some souls who fight against the evil to establish the reign of truth on earth.'[1] Such souls are called the *Avataras*, the Messiahs, and the prophets. They are the responses incarnate to the pressing challenges of their times. They do not fall from heaven but are the men living on the earth in whose hearts the urge to rise and meet the challenge becomes irresistible. These men are embodiments of the revolutionary

[1] यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽऽत्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ (गीता, ४–७)

compulsions of their age and gather momentum in their hearts to find a world of new values. But let us not forget that every soul responsive to the challenges of his time is also a potential *Avatara*, a potential Messiah, and a potential prophet.

This Gita concept of viewing every soul as a potential *Avatara* has also found its foothold in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. At Mount Sinai, it is decreed: 'I am the Lord, your God,' and in Psalm 82 it is sung: 'Ye are gods.' Christ firstly claims that 'I am the Light of the World,' and at another place voices out: 'Ye are the light of the world.' Mohammed in no uncertain terms states that 'Allah is one and all are His Messengers,' and 'every nation and every country shall have its own messengers sent unto it.' Although Buddha did not deny the existence of gods, he did not in any way regard them as superior to human beings and states in no uncertain terms that the true Buddhist can even surpass them if he follows the Middle Way or the Buddha's Eightfold Path. Bernard Shaw, in the twentieth century, advocates the same philosophy when he says that in order to be gods, men should know God. 'Yes', we too can say to ourselves, 'there is no Rama in the *Ramayana*, no Krishna in the Gita, no Mohammed in the Koran, no Moses and no Christ in the Bible, no Buddha in the Dhammapada, no Zoroaster in the Avesta, but all are within ourselves if we could see them in our being.'

And it is precisely this which can be said to be the greatest contribution made by this ancient and yet all-embracing culture to world philosophy and religion because it is only the acceptance of this fact that enables it to hold out a promise of salvation or *Moksha* to one and all. From the king to the poorest menial, all down the line, this great creation of human beings has been shown the way to breaking the *Karmic* cycle and bondage. What, therefore, is this way? Is it the narrow path difficult of access which only a few chosen ones may tread or is it a broad highway capable of accommodating the surge of the teaming millions? The horizons envisaged in this culture are very wide indeed, where even in the midst of storms and clouded skies, its ardent disciple will always find little patches of blue manifesting themselves, for the Gita says: 'Devoted to his own duty, man attains the highest perfection.'[1]

[1] स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धि लभते नरः। (गीता, १८–४५)

And the Gita also answers the question as to how the natural duty of each of us is determined in this great plan of the Master Maker, for it says: 'O Arjuna, the duties of *Brahmanas* (philosophers), *Kshatriyas* (warriors), *Vaishyas* (traders, craftsmen), and *Shudras* (labourers) are divided according to the qualities born of their respective *Gunas*.'[1] The question of *Gunas*, what they are, how they arise etc., has already been discussed elsewhere in this book. Suffice it to say that we, one and all of us, are cogs in the wheel of human society and as this wheel turns, each cog must gradually show itself by acting, acting, and acting in the living present, with heart within and God overhead. Let us remember that we are all functioning either as captains or as crews, but let us also resolve that whether we be captains or whether we be crews, we will all work in the Gita perspective. So let us put on the armour of *Karma Yoga* and with the sword of disinterested action slash delusion to pieces thus attaining *Moksha* which is the birthright of each and everyone of us. If this be not so, would the Vedas address mankind as: 'Hearken ye all, children of the Immortal!'[2]

Vedic culture views every soul as a child of the immortal having within it potential seeds of gigantic growth. Every soul is an *Avatara*, a Messiah, a prophet provided it rises equal to the challenges of the times. Let us all be up and doing to meet the challenge of the modern age and change the face of the earth. Humanity has erred for long and is in travail for the appearance of souls that will take up the challenges which have for ages defied solution and have to this day remained unsolved. In this hour of darkness let us pray for the dawn, for light is the nearest when darkness is the densest.

Finally, the best tribute that we can pay to the makers of this all-embracing culture must run parallel to the glowing tribute that Shakespeare's Cassius pays to Julius Caesar and to Rome. And so let the fancy's eye fancy to itself one of the Vedic master minds standing as it were on the highest pinnacle of spirituality and voicing forth:

How many ages hence,
Shall these our lofty codes be accepted as living norms
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!

[1] ब्राह्मणक्षत्रियविशां शूद्राणां च परंतप ।
कर्माणि प्रविभक्तानि स्वभावप्रभवैर्गुणैः ।। (गीता, १८–४१)

[2] शृण्वन्तु सर्वे अमृतस्य पुत्राः । (यजुर्वेद, ११–५)

APPENDIX

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

We have seen that our discussions in Chapter XIV led us to the inevitable conclusion that *Yoga* is transcendental in its very nature. Shri Mahesh Yogi who is a very prominent exponent of the transcendentalism of *Yoga* in modern times has very ably explained its nature and technique in his book *The Science Of Being And Art Of Living*. We shall therefore quote from his book and give our own explanations to elucidate the principles of transcendentalism.

He illustrates his thesis by the examples of a tree and a coconut. Concerning the tree he says: 'All the various attributes of the outer aspect of a tree—the trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruit—together with the various attributes of the inner root, go to make up the whole life of the tree. But when we look more closely into the life of the tree we find that although the root is the basis of the outer tree, it has no absolute, independent status. The root depends upon the nourishment or sap that comes from the area outside the root itself. This sap is the essence of the entire tree. It makes the root and, passing through the root, gives rise to the various aspects of the tree. We thus find that the tree is nothing but the nourishment that comes from outside the boundary of the individual tree. The tree is obviously limited within the bounds of the root and the outer tree, but its basis is outside these bounds. The basis of life of the tree is of transcendental nature; it transcends the boundaries of the inner and the outer tree.'

Let us now turn to the coconut. 'The outer part of the coconut consists of a hard shell and the husk of many fibres. The husk and its particular shape may be compared with the outer or gross physical aspect of life, the body. Underneath the shell is a more precious aspect of the coconut which is the solidified layer of milk, the kernel. Beyond the kernel is the essence of the coconut, the milk in its pure form. The milk in its pure form has solidified into a firm inner layer and surrounds itself with the harder and more solidified layer of the shell in order to protect the previous inner aspect of the coconut.' But wherefrom does the inner originate? That which originates the inner is the transcendental, and this in essence is the life giving current of the entire phenomenon of the coconut.

'Similarly, the life of man or any individual life in creation has three aspects: the outer, the inner and the transcendental. The outer aspect of life is the body; the inner is the subjective aspect of the personality which is concerned with the process of experience and action; and the transcendental aspect of life is the Being.'

In the case of an individual's life we find that the inner being is unmanifested, absolute, and transcendental. It outwardly manifests itself as the ego, the intellect, the mind, the senses, and the *Prana*. All these subtle states of existence make up the inner man which may be designated as the subjective within. This subjective within differs from the objective aspect of life which is the body with all its various attributes.

'Thus life in its full scope has three aspects : the objective aspect, the subjective aspect and the transcendental aspect. This is life in its totality.'

Without the transcendental as its base, life is like a building without a foundation, a ship without a rudder ever at the mercy of the tossing sea. It is like a dry leaf on the ground which drifts aimlessly in any direction obeying the blows and voice of the wind because it has no roots to entrench itself into the soil. Underneath the subtlest layer of all that exists in the relative field is the abstract, absolute stratum of pure being which is unmanifested and transcendental.

What is this transcendental existence which underlies all that exists in the phenomenal world of matter and life ? It is the sap outside the tree that gives life to the tree; it is the inner core of the coconut that is the essence behind its outer shell; it is the life force that animates the objective and subjective existence of all creation. In fact it is the inner reality, the essence within, and the cosmic transcendental existence whose vibrations emanate and crystallize themselves in the physical phenomena of all that we see, touch, hear, smell, and taste in the world outside.

According to the Upanishadic conception all life springs from the transcendental which is the perennial spring of all that exists. This transcendental is the *Brahma* which in its nature is absolute existence (सत्), absolute consciousness (चित्), and absolute bliss (आनन्द). In short the Vedic seers of the Upanishads describe it as अखण्डसच्चिदानन्द, i.e., infinite existence, infinite consciousness, and infinite bliss.

If the transcendental is the substratum of all that exists, as we have seen it is, it must needs be infinite in existence, infinite in consciousness, and infinite in bliss. For all finite existence, finite consciousness, and finite bliss must emanate from something relatively greater and higher till the greatest or the infinite is reached or penetrated. Anything small is small only in relation to something big, but does not the bigger become smaller in relation to the still bigger ? It is by this process that ultimately we arrive at an entity which is absolute in bigness. And it is that entity which has been looked upon as the transcendental in existence, consciousness, and bliss.

Thus the question now is: how much do we partake or assimilate within ourselves of that infinite existence, infinite consciousness, and infinite bliss? It is at this point that Vedic psychology of the Upanishads differs from the Freudian psychology of psycho-analysis. What is that which makes the two so branch off ?

Psycho-analysis lays stress on the three aspects of consciousness, namely, the conscious, the pre-conscious, and the unconscious. Its main thesis is that the unconscious is the storehouse of suppressed memories and desires and is the cause of any abnormal behaviour in the individual. The aim of this psychology is to co-relate the conscious and the subconscious states of the mind so that with the disappearance of the inner conflicts and tensions normality of behaviour may set in.

But Upanishadic psychology goes much deeper than the Freudian analysis in as much as it necessitates the conscious mind to enlarge itself and go much further than the pre-conscious or the unconscious. It demands of the conscious mind to go beyond the pre-conscious and the unconscious mind in order to penetrate into the cosmic transcendental consciousness which is the source of all existence, all consciousness, and all bliss. Co-ordination of the conscious with the pre-conscious promoting integration which is the fulcrum of a healthy mind, as envisaged and practised by the psycho-analysts, is essential for a normal and relaxed living. But it is the co-ordination and contact of the conscious mind with the transcendental cosmic existence, consciousness, and bliss by crossing over the barriers of the pre-conscious and the unconscious that enables the individual to have a dip into the true source or the real fountain of all life.

In the words of Shri Mahesh Yogi : 'the effects of transcendental deep meditation go beyond the limits set by psycho-analysis which

strives to bring to the conscious state only the repressed material in the pre-conscious area of the psyche, but fails to correlate the conscious mind with the deeper levels of the pre-conscious and unconscious and thus fails to uncover the latent faculties, to say nothing of reaching the state of pure consciousness beyond the pre-conscious or subconscious. The difference between the Upanishadic psychology and Freudian psychology is that whereas the former touches the springs of infinite existence, infinite consciousness, and infinite bliss thus partaking of these eternal verities inherent in the transcendental, the latter confines itself to the unfortunate task of overshadowing consciousness by digging into the mind of the miserable past which darkens and besmears consciousness.'

To quote Shri Mahesh again : 'Prince Alliata de Montrereale, a member of the Italian Parliament, thus gave his experiences of Transcendental deep meditation to fellow members of the various parliaments of the world at an international parliamentary gathering in Paris in 1962. Said he :

' "The study of psychology has shown that whatever a man is able to express of himself is only a part of his whole. The greater part of man does not find expression in his behaviour and activity in life, because the conscious mind is only a part of the total mind that a man possesses. So what we need is to make available to every man in our country a technique of enabling him to use his full mind. For example, if a man is using only a fraction of his mind, by enabling him to use the whole of his mind, he will become infinitely greater as a man. He will think much more deeply and more fully than he now does."

'Suppose that the conscious mind of man is only one-fourth of his total mind, then whatever he thinks and does is only a quarter of his real potential. If we want him to use his full potential, his full mind should be made conscious and only then his thought force will be four times more powerful and he will be four times stronger and four times more sensible and happier than before.

'For this purpose we propose adopting one simple method which will enlarge the conscious mind and thereby simultaneously improve man on all levels—physical, mental and spiritual—and also increase his creative intelligence and improve his relations with fellow-men.

'This one simple method of improving each man as a whole is available in the world today.'

This method is called transcendental meditation. 'The technique of gaining transcendental consciousness brings to the conscious level the subtle levels of thought. This is how the whole of the thought process comes within the range of conscious mind. The conscious capacity of the mind increases to the fullest scope of the mind. This is how it is possible to enable a man to rise up to his full mental potential in thought and action.

'The practice of transcendental deep meditation takes the conscious mind directly to the transcendental state of consciousness. The absolute field of the transcendental Being then comes within the range of the conscious mind. When this field of the Being is reached, the *individual conscious mind* takes the form of pure consciousness. Because that pure consciousness is an experience in itself, we can frame the expression that in the transcendental state of pure consciousness the absolute Being comes within the range of conscious mind.

'When the absolute Being, which is the plane of the cosmic law, comes within the conscious capacity of the mind, the mind is naturally in tune with the cosmic law. All the laws of nature are based on the cosmic law, and when the individual mind becomes tuned with that and remains in its attunement, it is in tune with all the laws of nature which are responsible for the progressive stream of evolution. Then the flow of the mind is in accordance with the natural stream of evolution, quite in conformity with the cosmic purpose of life. This is how the practice of transcendental deep meditation succeeds in establishing the mind in the stage of cosmic mind.'

Illustrating how the mind enters into the transcendental levels of consciousness Shri Mahesh Yogi says : 'When a man takes a dive into a pond, he passes through the surface levels of water to the deeper levels, reaches the bottom and comes up. A second and third dive takes him through all levels of water in the same way. The practice of diving makes the man familiar with all the levels of the water, and as the familiarity with the deeper levels grows, the diver is able to remain longer at the bottom of the pond. When he is able to remain at the bottom for some time, with more and more practice, he gains the ability to move around at any level of the pond at will.

experience we could start experiencing the object and eventually arrive at the transcendental state of consciousness.

'Through the experience of a thought we could experience the subtle states of thinking and, transcending the subtlest state of thinking, we are sure to arrive at the transcendental state' of absolute being which is *Sat-Chit-Anand*—changeless, consciousness, and bliss.

'Thinking in itself is the subtle state of speech. When we speak, our words are audible to the ears, but if we do not speak, the words do not become perceptible to the organ of hearing. Thus we find that thought is a subtle form of sound.

'A proper thought means a thought whose nature is harmonious and useful to the thinker and the surroundings. Every thought, as has every spoken word, has some influence on the thinker and on his surroundings. Just as a stone thrown into a pond produces waves that reach all the extremities of the pond, any thought, word or action produces waves in the atmosphere, and these waves travel in all directions and strike against everything in the atmosphere. They produce some influence in every level of creation. The whole universe is influenced by every thought, word or action of every individual.

'When such is the wide range of the influence of a thought, one has to be very particular about the quality of thought one creates in his mind. There may be a thought whose influence is detrimental to the thinker and to the rest of the universe. Likewise, there may be a thought whose influence is favourable and useful to the thinker and to the world at large. Because each personality has its own quality, it is extremely necessary that each man selects for himself a special quality of thought whose physical influence will be conducive and useful to himself and the world at large.'

Thoughts in their grossest form are words. We reach the transcendental state of consciousness through thought by holding the link of *Prana.* Thought in its origin is word, so word constitutes the first step of the ladder which one is required to ascend in order to proceed in the direction of the transcendental state of consciousness known as *Sat-Chit-Anand.*

This word carefully selected by a *Guru,* which may set the initiate in tune with the cosmic consciousness, is referred to as a *Mantra.* Thus begins the proper technique of transcendental deep meditation through a *Mantra* selected by a *Guru.*

It is a matter of common knowledge that there are many *Mantras* prevalent among Indian *Gurus*, which are secretly imparted by them to the initiates. The most common of these *Mantras* are *AUM*, *GAYATRI*, *SOHAM*, and *SHIVOHAM*, etc. The students of Vedic literature know that *AUM* is the commonest and the most important of the *Mantras*, so much so that the Mandukya Upanishad is solely devoted to its exposition.*

How does the Mantra Act

As *Prana* is the link between the human and the transcendental the different steps on this ladder are the various forms of the recitation of the *Mantra* at the different levels of consciousness. At each level of consciousness there must be perfect co-ordination and harmony between the recitation of the *Mantra* and the exercise of *Pranayama*.

Psychologically speaking, we may say that there are four levels of consciousness: the conscious, the subconscious, the unconscious, and the transcendental.

With *Pranayama* we start the recital of the *Mantra* in the conscious state. This is its verbal recital and is called the *Vaikhari* stage of the *Mantra*. In this stage the sound is audible and is repeated by the word of mouth.

The next stage in the recital of the *Mantra* with *Pranayama* is the subconscious. Here the verbal recital ceases and the *Mantra* is inaudibly uttered or concentrated upon more in thought than in word. This non-verbal, inaudible recital is called the *Madhyama* stage of the *Mantra*. *Madhyama* in Sanskrit means the middle one.

The third stage of the recital of the *Mantra* with *Pranayama* is the unconscious state. In this stage the word is no longer recited, but only the consciousness of the impact of the *Mantra* remains. At this point the verbal consciousness of the *Mantra* is obliterated. This stage is called *Pashyanti* which means the seeing state. One simply sees or feels the impact of the *Mantra* force, but the verbal or the non-verbal incantation of the *Mantra* is no longer there.

The last stage is called the *Para* or the transcendental stage. *Para* means beyond or the transcendental. Describing this stage Shri Mahesh Yogi says: 'Since the Being is of transcendental

*ओमित्येदमक्षरमिदं सर्वं तस्योपव्याख्यानं भूतं भवद् भविष्यदिति
सर्वमोंकारमेव । यच्चान्यत् त्रिकालातीतं तदप्योंकार एव । (माण्डूक्य, १-१)

virtue, it does not belong to the range of any of the sense of perception. Only when sensory perception has come to an end can the transcendental field of the Being be reached. As long as we are experiencing through the senses we are in the relative field. Therefore, the Being certainly cannot be experienced by means of any of the senses. This shows that through whatever sense of experience we proceed we must come to the ultimate limit of experience through that sense. Transcending that, we will reach a state of consciousness where the experiencer no longer experiences.

'When we have transcended the field of experience of the sublest object, the experiencer is left by himself without an experience, without an object of experience, and without the process of experiencing. When the subject is left without an object of experience, having transcended the sublest state of the object, the experiencer steps out of the process of experiencing and arrives at the state of absolute existence, absolute consciousness and absolute bliss. The mind is then found in the state of transcendentalism which is out of the relative.'

Power of the Mantra

Mantra is a formula which clothes a powerful thought. It is a means to lead one to the transcendental, which is the source of a perennially blissful consciousness. As we proceed with the recitation of the *Mantra* from the conscious to the transcendental level of consciousness, its tremendous power is gradually released. Says Shri Mahesh Yogi : 'We know that power is greater in the subtle strata of creation than in the gross. If we throw a stone at someone it will hurt him, but if we could enter into its subtle strata and excite an atom of the stone, tremendous energy will be released and the effect will be far greater. Similarly, when we enter into the subtler states of a thought, we appreciate its finer levels and the power is much greater than it is on the common conscious level of the mind' (where we simply repeat the *Mantra* verbally). Thus it means that the deeper we go into the process of the subtlety of the *Mantra,* its power to lead us to the transcendental increases. Conversely, the grosser the level of consciousness, the lesser is the power inherent in it which is manifested. 'For example, the electric current from a battery reaches the light bulb and radiates out as a beam of light. As the beam proceeds further from its source, its intensity diminishes until it reaches a limit when the light

may be said to be nil. Likewise, from the inexhaustible battery of the Being (Sat-Chit-Anand), the bliss consciousness radiates and as it proceeds further from its source the degree of bliss diminishes.' The aim underlying the effort involved in the *Mantra* recital-cum-concentration through its four stages is to reach the inexhaustible battery of being. This is done by progressively releasing the inherent power of the *Mantra* at each stage from *Vaikhari* to *Madhyama*, from *Madhyama* to *Pashyanti,* and from *Pashyanti* to *Para.*

This, in brief, is the transcendental meditation of *Yoga.*

GLOSSARY

A

Abhinivesha (*abhinivesha*)—will to live—अभिनिवेश
Abhyudaya (*abhyudaya*)—physical well-being—अभ्युदय
Adhyayana (*adhyayana*)—study—अध्ययन
Aham Brahmasmi (*aham brahmāsmi*)—I am not small but great—अहं ब्रह्मास्मि
Ahankara (*ahankāra*)—ego—अहंकार
Ahimsa (*ahimsā*)—non-violence—अहिंसा
Ajya Chakra (*ājyā chakra*)—frontal wheel or centre situated in the *Sushumna*—आज्जा चक्र
Akarma (*akarma*)—no action, or the absence of the elements of an action—अकर्म
Akasha (*ākāsha*)—sky or ether—आकाश
Alpa (*alpa*)—the finite or the limited—अल्प
Anahata Chakra (*anāhata chakra*)—heart wheel or centre situated in the *Sushumna*—अनाहत चक्र
Anand (*ānand*)—all bliss—आनंद
Ananda maya kosha (*ānanda maya kōsha*)—bliss sheath—आनंदमय कोश
Anasakti, Anasakti Yoga (*anāsakti, anāsakti yōga*)—non-attachment, the path of non-attachment—अनासक्ति, अनासक्तियोग
Anga (*anga*)—a limb—अंग
Anitya (*anitya*)—the temporary—अनित्य
Anna maya kosha (*anna maya kōsha*)—food sheath—अन्नमय कोश
Annaprashana (*annaprāshana*)—the ceremony of giving the child solid food to eat—अन्नप्राशन
Antah Karana Chatushtaya (*antah karana chatushtaya*)—the four internal organs or integral parts of the soul—अन्तःकरण चतुष्टय
Antevasin (*antevāsin*)—pupil—अन्तेवासिन्
Antyeshti (*antyeshti*)—cremation ceremony—अन्त्येष्टि
Apara, Apara Vidya (*aparā, aparā vidya*)—that which is not beyond and is easy to reach, the path leading to materialism—अपरा, अपरा विद्या
Aparigraha (*aparigraha*)—to loosen one's hold, self-abnegation, renunciation—अपरिग्रह
Artha (*artha*)—to have and enjoy plenty of worldly goods—अर्थ
Asahayoga (*asahayōga*)—passive resistance to untruth—असहयोग

Asakti (*āsakti*)—attachment—आसक्ति
Asana (*āsana*)—balanced posture—आसन
Asat (*asat*)—the unreal—असत्
Ashma Bhava (*ashmā, bhava*)—be firm like a stone—अश्मा भव
Ashrama (*āshrama*)—stage—आश्रम
Ashtanga Yoga (*ashtānga yōga*)—the eightfold spiritual path of *Raja Yoga*—अष्टांग योग
Asmi, Asmita (*asmi, asmitā*)—I am, I-am-ness—अस्मि, अस्मिता
Asteya (*asteya*)—non-stealing—अस्तेय
Atma (*ātmā*)—spiritual principle—आत्मा
Atmarata (*ātmarata*)—self-satisfied—आत्मरत
Atma-santushta (*ātma-santushta*) — self-satisfied, self-possessed — आत्मसंतुष्ट
Atma tattva (*ātma tattva*)—individual life principle or human consciousness—आत्मतत्व
Atma-tripta (*ātma-tripta*)—self-contended, self-possessed—आत्मतृप्त
Atmavid (*ātmavid*)—one who has the knowledge of the self—आत्मविद्
AUM (*aum*)—a sacred word—ओम् (ॐ)
Avarana (*āvarana*)—a veil or a cover—आवरण
Avatara (*avatāra*)—every soul which fights against the evil to establish the reign of truth on earth—अवतार
Avidya (*avidyā*)—ignorance—अविद्या

B

Bakasana (*bakāsana*)—crane pose—वकासन
Basti (*bastī*)—to draw water through the anus into the intestines and to dispel it—वस्ती
Bhakti, Bhakti Yoga (*bhakti, bhakti yōga*)—love and devotion, the path of love and devotion for self-realization—भक्ति, भक्ति योगा
Bhargah (*bhargah*)—the ripening power—भर्गः
Bhusrika (*bhasrikā*)—to breathe through each nostril like the bellows of a blacksmith—भस्त्रिका
Bhoga Yoni (*bhōga yōni*)—animal life ordained for the gathering of mechanical experiences pertaining to the operation of the *Karmic* law—भोगयोनि
Bhooh (*bhooh*)—being—भूः
Bhooma (*bhooma*)—the unlimited or the infinite—भूमः
Bhuvah (*bhuvah*)—becoming—भुवः
Brahma (*brahma*)—Supreme Spirit—ब्रह्म

Brahmachari (*brahmacharī*)—one who lives the life of willing abstention to prepare oneself for the next stage of a householder, or a student, or a disciple—ब्रह्मचारी

Brahmacharya (*brahmacharya*)—self-control—ब्रह्मचर्य

Brahmana (*brāhmana*)—a person in whom the *Sattvika* or the unactive quality of the mind dominates—ब्राह्मण

Buddhi (*buddhi*)—intellect—बुद्धि

C

Chakra Asana (*chakra āsana*)—circle pose—चक्रासन

Chakras (*chakras*)—the centres situated in *Sushumna*, i.e., the ethereal cord of the subtle body—चक्र

Chetana (*chetanā*)—a state of consciousness corresponding to the pre-conscious of psycho-analysis—चेतना

Chinmudra (*chinmudrā*)—a posture of the hand in which the index finger touches the middle portion of the thumb and the other three fingers are stretched outwards—चिन्मुद्रा

Chit (*chit*)—all knowledge—चित्

Chitta (*chitta*)—a state or area of the mind corresponding to the pre-conscious of psycho-analysis—चित्त

Choodakarma (*choodākarma*)—the ceremony of cutting the hair in the third year after birth—चूड़ाकर्म

D

Dama (*dama*)—control of the body and its needs—दम

Deva Rina (*deva rina*)—the debt we owe to our teachers for imparting us knowledge—देवऋण

Devasya (*devasya*)—of the Divine—देवस्य

Dhanurasana (*dhanurāsana*)—stringed bow pose—धनुरासन

Dharana (*dhāranā*)—*concentration*—धारणा

Dharma (*dharma*)—religion—धर्म

Dheemahi (*dheemahi*)—contemplate—धीमहि

Dhiyah (*dhiyah*)—of the intellect—धियः

Dhoti (*dhoti*)—to swallow slowly a thin, fine cloth 3-4 inches broad and 12-15 feet long into the stomach and then to draw it out—धोति

Dhyana (*dhyāna*)—deliberation or meditation—ध्यान

Divya Chakshu (*divya chakshu*)—super-conscious sight—दिव्यचक्षु

Drashta (*drashtā*)—the seer or the observer—द्रष्टा
Dvesha (*dvesha*)—aversion—द्वेष

G

Gandha (*gandha*)—smell—गंध
Garbhadhana (*garbhādhāna*)—the ceremony of conception, that is, for the union of the sperm and the ovum—गर्भाधान
Gayatri (*gāyatri*)—a sacred formula—गायत्री
Graha (*graha*)—to grasp, to hold—ग्रह्
Grihastha (*grihastha*)—the married life of a householder or the second stage in the journey of life—गृहस्थ
Guna (*guna*)—a quality or an attribute of the mind—गुण
Guru (*guru*)—teacher—गुरु
Gurukula (*gurukula*)—family of the teacher, i.e., an educational institution where young neophytes reside with their forest dwelling teachers—गुरुकुल

H

Hatha Yoga (*hatha yōga*)—the path for the development of the body—हठयोग

I

Indriya Daman (*indriya daman*)—strict control of the senses—इंद्रियदमन
Indriyarata (*indriyarata*)—one who seeks satisfaction in the enjoyment of the senses—इंद्रियरत
Ishvara Pranidhana (*ishvara pranidhāna*)—resignation to God—ईश्वरप्रणिधान

J

Jagrata (*jāgrata*)—the wakeful phase of the spirit's existence—जाग्रत
Jalandhara Bandha (*jālandhara bandha*)—chin lock—जालंधर बंध
Japa (*japa*)—incantation—जप
Jatakarma (*jātakarma*)—certain ceremonies performed on the birth of the child—जातकर्म

Jati, Jati Vyavastha (*jāti, jāti vyavasthā*)—caste, caste system—जाति, जाति व्यवस्था

Jivatma (*jīvātmā*)—human consciousness—जीवात्मा

Jnyana; Jnyana Marga, Jnyana Yoga (*jnyāna; jnyāna mārga, jnyāna yōga*)—knowledge; the path of knowledge for self-realization—ज्ञान, ज्ञान मार्ग, ज्ञान योग

K

Kaivalya (*kaivalya*)—the original untainted state of consciousness—कैवल्य

Kala (*kāla*)—time—काल

Kama (*kāma*)—lust, fulfilment of sensual desires—काम

Karana sharira (*kārana sharīra*)—causal body—कारण शरीर

Karma (*karma*)—action—कर्म

Karma Marga, Karma Sanyasa, Karma Yoga (*karma mārga, karma sanyāsa, karma yōga*)—path of action for self-realization—कर्म मार्ग, कर्म संन्यास, कर्म योग

Karma Yoni (*karma yōni*)—human life—कर्म योनि

Karnavedha (*karnavedha*)—the fifth year ceremony for perforating the lobes of the ears of the child—कर्णवेध

Karta (*kartā*)—the doer—कर्ता

Kevala (*kevala*)—alone, single, one without a second—केवल

Kosha (*kōsha*)—sheath—कोश

Kriyamana Karma (*kriyamāna karma*)—an action which is being performed in the present—क्रियमाण कर्म

Krodha (*krōdha*)—anger—क्रोध

Kshatriya (*kshatriya*)—a person in whom the *Sattvika*-cum-*Rajasika*, i.e., unactive-cum-active quality of the mind dominates—क्षत्रिय

Kula (*kula*)—family—कुल

Kumbhaka (*kumbhaka*)—holding the breath whilst performing *Pranayama*—कुंभक

Kundalini, Kundalini Yoga (*kundalinī, kundalinī yōga*)—a physical power or element situated at the base of the ethereal spinal cord (*Sushumna*), the path for the awakening of the *Kundalini* which lies dormant—कुंडलिनी, कुंडलिनी योग

L

Laya Yoga (*laya yōga*)—*Kundalini* awakening—लययोग

Lobha (*lobha*)—greed—लोभ
Lokeshana (*lokeshanā*)—the dominating urge to be known and to have respect and honour—लोकेषणा

M

Madhyama (*madhyamā*)—the second stage between sound and soundlessness to be passed through while performing *Japa* or incantation to reach the transcendental—मध्यमा
Madhyama Japa (*madhyamā japa*)—the cessation of the verbal incantation of *OM* but the continuance of the mental inward awareness of the states of consciousness through the medium of this formula—मध्यमा जप
Mahat (*mahat*)—great, infinite—महत्
Maha-Vrata (*mahā-vrata*)—a great, universal, and time abiding principle—महाव्रत
Mala (*mālā*)—rosary—माला
Manas (*manas*)—mind—मनस्
Manas tattva (*manas tattva*)—that principle of the mind which corresponds to reason—मनस तत्व
Manipura Chakra (*manipūra chakra*)—navel wheel or centre situated in the *Sushumna*—मणिपूर चक्र
Mano maya kosha (*manō maya kōsha*)—mental sheath—मनोमय कोश
Mantra (*mantra*)—any sacred formula—मन्त्र
Mantravid (*mantravid*)—an expert in learning by heart the knowledge contained in books—मन्त्रविद्
Marga (*mārga*)—path—मार्ग
Matsara (*matsara*)—jealousy—मत्सर
Matsya Nyaya (*matsya nyāya*)—the law of the fish—मत्स्यन्याय
Matsyasana (*matsyāsana*)—fish pose—मत्स्यासन
Maya (*māyā*)—illusion or wrong conception both about ourselves as well as the real nature of the world—माया
Mayi Manah Aveshya (*mayi manah āveshya*)—penetrate into Me, be absorbed in Me—मयी मन: आवेश्य
Moha (*mōha*)—attachment—मोह
Moksha (*mōksha*)—liberation from desires in this life after their fulfilment through *Dharma, Artha,* and *Kama*—मोक्ष
Mooladhara Chakra (*moolādhāra chakra*)—pelvic wheel or centre situated in the *Sushumna*—मूलाधार चक्र

Mukti (*mukti*)—liberation from the cycle of birth and death because no desires are left for the fulfilment of which birth and death are necessary—मुक्ति

Mumukshutva (*mumukshutva*)—eagerness for liberation—मुमुक्षुत्व

N

Namakarana (*nāmakarana*)—naming ceremony of the child—नामकरण

Neti (*neti*)—to insert in one nostril a soft fine twisted thread and draw it out through the mouth—नेति

Nirguna Upasana (*nirguna upāsanā*)—worship of an impersonal God—निर्गुण उपासना

Nishkama Karma (*nishkāma karma*)-disinterested action—निष्काम कर्म

Nishkramana (*nishkrāmana*)—the ceremony of taking the child out for the first time—निष्क्रमण

Nishreyasa (*nishreyasa*)—spiritual well-being—निश्रेयस

Nitya (*nitya*)—the permanent—नित्य

Nitya Yuktah (*nitya yuktah*)—always day and night abiding in the beloved—नित्ययुक्त :

Nivritti; Nivritti Marga (*nivritti; nivritti mārga*)—quiescence, repulsion, withdrawal; the path leading to quiescence—निवृत्तिमार्ग

Niyama (*niyama*)—five observances—नियम

Nyoli (*nyoli*)—to turn the intestinal muscles right and left as also round and round to give exercise to the large and small intestines—न्योलि

O

OM (*om*)—a sacred word—ओम्

P

Padmasana (*padmāsana*)—lotus pose—पद्मासन

Pancha Jnyana Indriyas (*pancha jnyāna indriyas*)—five organs of perception—पंच ज्ञानेन्द्रिय

Pancha Karma Indriyas (*pancha karma indriyas*)—five organs of action—पंच कर्मेन्द्रिय

Pancha Kleshas (*pancha kleshas*)—five afflictions—पंचक्लेश

Pancha Sthoola Bhootas (*pancha sthoola bhootas*)—five physical elements or states of matter—पंचस्थूलभूत

Pancha Tanmatras (*pancha tanmātrās*)—five 'that-much-ness' elements—पंचतन्मात्रा
Para (*parā*)—the last stage of consciousness. Here there is silence and culminates in consciousness reaching the transcendental—परा
Para (*parā*)—that which is distant and difficult to get to or cling to—परा
Parama Atma tattva (*parama ātma tattva*)—world consciousness—परम आत्म तत्व
Parashura Bhava (*parashura bhava*)—to be sharp like a trident—परशुर्भव
Parigraha (*parigraha*)—to grasp or to hold or to cling to from all sides—परिग्रह्
Pashchimottana Asana (*pashchimōttāna āsana*)—posterior stretching pose—पश्चिमोत्तान आसन
Pashyanti (*pashyantī*)—the third stage between sound and soundlessness to be passed through while performing *Japa* or incantation to reach the transcendental—पश्यंन्ती
Pashyanti Japa (*pashyantī japa*)—the starting of an automatic and involuntary process for the realization of consciousness which is ushered in by concentrating on *OM*—पश्यन्ती जप
Pinda (*pinda*)—the body or the material unit—पिंड
Pitri Rina (*pitri rina*)—the debt we owe to our parents for giving us birth—पितृ ऋण
Pooraka (*pooraka*)—inbreathing whilst performing *Pranayama*—पूरक
Prachodayat (*prachōdayāt*)—may direct—प्रचोदयात्
Prakriti (*prakriti*)—matter—प्रकृति
Prana (*prāna*)—vital breath—प्राण
Prana maya kosha (*prāna maya kōsha*)—vital breath sheath—प्राणमय कोश
Pranayama (*prānāyāma*)—breath control—प्राणायाम
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Prarambha (*prārambha*)—beginning—प्रारंभ
Pratyahara (*pratyāhāra*)—withdrawal of the senses—प्रत्याहार
Pravrittees (*pravrittees*)—propensities of human beings—प्रवृत्ति
Pravritti; Pravritti Marga (*pravritti; pravritti mārga*)—movement, attraction, pursuit; the path of pursuit—प्रवृत्ति; प्रवृत्ति मार्ग
Preya, Preya Marga (*preya, preya mārga*)—pleasure, the pleasurable path—प्रेय, प्रेयमार्ग

Prithvi (*prithvī*)—earth—पृथ्वी

Pumsavana (*pumsavana*)—the impregnation ceremony performed during the third month of the pregnancy—पुंसवन

Purusha (*purusha*)—human consciousness—पुरुष

Putraishana (*putraishanā*)–the sex urge to procreate children—पुत्रैषणा

R

Rajas, Rajoguna (*rajas, rajōguna*)—activity—रजस्, रजोगुण

Rajasika (*rājasika*)—active quality of the mind—राजसिक

Rina (*rina*)—debt—ऋण

Rishi Rina (*rishi rina*)—the debt we owe to the builders of a healthy social organization—ऋषि ऋण

S

Sadhana Chatushtaya (*sādhana chatushtaya*)—fourfold practice—साधन चतुष्टय

Saguna Upasana (*saguna upāsanā*)—the worship of a personal God—सगुण उपासना

Sahasrara (*sahasrāra*)—the point where the Hindus wear the *Shikha* or the tuft of hair on their heads—सहस्त्रार

Samadhana (*samādhāna*)—steadfastness, firmness of purpose, constancy, and resolution—समाधान

Samadhi (*samādhi*)—contemplation—समाधि

Samavartana (*samāvartana*)—the graduation or convocation ceremony—समावर्तन

Sampatti (*sampatti*)—spiritual acquisitions or attainments—संपत्ति

Sanchita Karma (*sanchita karma*)—past, static, and accumulated *Karmas*—संचित कर्म

Sanskara (*sanskāra*)—the impressions engraved on the nervous system—संस्कार

Santosha (*santōsha*)—contentment—संतोष

Sanyasa (*sanyāsa*)—the last stage in the pilgrimage of life in which all ties are broken, and there is unrestricted freedom for the soul—संन्यास

Sarva (*sarva*)—whole, entire—सर्व

Sarva-Bhauma (*sārva-bhauma*)—universal principles—सार्वभौम

Sarvangasana (*sarvāngāsana*)—all-members pose—सर्वांगासन

Sat (*sat*)—all pervading—सत्

Sat-Chit-Anand (*sat-chit-ānand*)—changeless, consciousness, and bliss—सत् चित् आनंद
Sattva, Sattvaguna (*sattva, sattvaguna*)—inactivity—सत्व, सत्वगुण
Sattvika (*sāttvika*)—inactive quality of the mind—सात्विक
Satya (*satya*)—truth—सत्य
Satyagraha (*satyāgraha*)—insistence on truth—सत्याग्रह
Savituh (*savituh*)—of the sun—सवितु:
Seemantonnayana (*seemantōnnayana*)—the pre-natal ceremony to mark the growth of the psychic self of the child—सीमंतोन्नयन
Shabda (*shabda*)—sound—शब्द
Shama (*shama*)—peaceful mind—शम
Sharira (*sharīra*)—body—शरीर
Shat Karma (*shat karma*)—six purifications—षट् कर्म
Shat Sampatti (*shat sampatti*)—the six spiritual acquisitions or attainments—षट् संपत्ति
Shaucha (*shaucha*)—purification—शौच
Shayana (*shayana*)—to reside in or to rest—शयन
Shikha (*shikhā*)—the tuft of hair on the head of the Hindu—शिखा
Shishya (*shishya*)—one who is disciplined—शिष्य
Shraddha (*shraddhā*)—an abiding faith in the design and working of the grand plan of the universe by the Supreme Power—श्रद्धा
Shraddhaya Upetah (*shraddhayā upetah*)—come unto Me with faith—श्रद्धया उपेत:
Shreya, Shreya Marga (*shreya, shreya mārga*)—profitable, the profitable or the ultimately beneficial path—श्रेय, श्रेय मार्ग
Shudra (*shūdra*)—the person in whom the Tamasika or inactive quality of the mind is all-embracing—शूद्र
Shvobhavah (*shvōbhavah*)—fleeting—स्वोभाव:ह
Sparsha (*sparsha*)—touch—स्पर्श
Sthita-prajnya (*sthita-prajnya*)—a mind in balance—स्थितप्रज्ञ
Sthoola Bhootas (*sthoola bhootas*)—solidified states of matter—स्थूल भूत
Sukshma sharira (*sūkshma sharīra*)—subtle body—सूक्ष्म शरीर
Sushumna (*sushumna*)—the ethereal cord of the subtle body—सुषुम्ना
Sushupti (*sushupti*)—the dreamless sleeping phase of the spirit—सुषुप्ति
Svadhyaya (*svādhyāya*)—resignation to God—स्वाध्याय
Svah (*svah*)—bliss—स्व:
Swa (*swa*)—self—स्व
Swadhisthana Chakra (*swādhisthāna chakra*)—generative wheel or centre situated in the *Sushumna*—स्वाधिष्ठान चक्र

Swadhyaya (*swādhyāya*)—studiousness—स्वाध्याय
Swapna (*swapna*)—the dreaming phase of the spirit's existence—स्वप्न

T

Tamas, Tamoguna (*tamas, tamōguna*)—unactivity—तमस्, तमोगुण
Tamasika (*tāmasika*)—unactive quality of the mind—तामसिक
Tan, Tat (*tan, tat*)—that—तन्, तत्
Tanmatra (*tanmātrā*)—that-much-ness—तन्मात्रा
Tapa (*tapa*)—self-discipline, self-control, self-restraint—तप
Tapasya (*tapasyā*)—austerity and ascetism—तपस्या
Tejas (*tejas*)—fire—तेजस्
Titiksha (*titiksha*)—endurance of the hardships of life with a smiling face—तितिक्षा
Trataka (*trātaka*)—to look at the junction of the eyebrows or at something without a wink till tears roll down—त्राटक
Tureeya (*tureeya*)—the essential phase of the spirit's existence—तुरीय

U

Upanayana (*upanayana*)—to take the child near the preceptor—उपनयन

V

Vaikhari (*vaikharī*)—the first stage, comprising of loud incantation, to be passed through while performing *Japa* or incantation to reach the transcendental—वैखरी
Vaikhari Japa (*vaikharī japa*)—the loud physical incantation of *OM* with full awareness of the four states of consciousness—वैखरी जप
Vairagya (*vairāgya*)—absence of passion—वैराग्य
Vaishya (*vaishya*)—a person in whom the *Rajasika*-cum-*Tamasika* or active-cum-inactive quality of the mind holds its sway—वैश्य
Vajra Nadi (*vajra nādī*)—vital nerve—वज्रनाडी
Vajrasana (*vajrāsana*)—adamantine pose—वज्रासन
Vanaprastha (*vānaprastha*)—the stage in the journey of life in which one set out for the forest to make one's abode there; it also means that one should voluntarily renounce the world and its objects after having had one's full share of enjoyment—वानप्रस्थ

Varna (*varna*)—a spiritual propensity—वर्ण

Varna Vyavastha (*varna vyavasthā*)—a system of social classification based on the spiritual propensities of the different individuals. Its aim and object is spiritual and social progress—वर्ण व्यवस्था

Vasanas (*vāsanās*)—desires—वासना

Vasin (*vāsin*)—one who resides—वासिन

Vayu (*vāyu*)—air—वायु

Vedarambha (*vedārambha*)—commencement of studies—वेदारंभ

Vedosi (*vedōsi*)—Thou art the Veda—वेदोऽसि

Vibhutees (*vibhūtees*)—the glorious manifestation of the Most High—विभूति

Vidyarthi (*vidyārthī*)—student—विद्यार्थी

Vidya Snataka (*vidyā snātaka*)—one who had graduated in humanities and sciences—विद्यास्नातक

Vijnyana (*vijnyāna*)—intellect—विज्ञान

Vijnyana maya kosha (*vijnyāna maya kōsha*)—intellect sheath—विज्ञानमय कोश

Vikarma (*vikarma*)—a selfless action performed with all the zest and enthusiasm rightly channelled—विक्रम

Vikriti (*vikriti*)—that state of matter in which the law of cause and effect till now latent became patent and brought about the transformation and manifestation of the unmanifested, latent form of *Prakriti*—विकृति

Vikshepa (*vikshepa*)—it is that state of mind in which the subjective or objective is hidden behind the veil—विक्षेप

Vishuddhi Chakra (*vishuddhi chakra*)—laryngeal wheel or centre situated in the *Sushumna*—विशुध्दि चक्र

Vishwa Roopa (*vishwa roopa*)—universal form of God—विश्वरूप

Vittaishana (*vittaishanā*)—the acquisitive urge to accumulate wealth—वित्तैषणा

Vivaha (*vivāha*)—the marriage ceremony—विवाह

Viveka (*viveka*)—a discrimination between the impermanent and the permanent—विवेक

Y

Yajnya (*yajnya*)—sacrifice—यज्ञ

Yama (*yama*)—restraint—यम

Yoga (*yōga*)—a path for self-realization—योग

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